Novels and Novelists

Katherine Mansfield

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The Works of
Katherine Mansfield

BLISS

THE GARDEN PARTY

THE DOVE'S NEST

THE LITTLE GIRL

POEMS

IN A GERMAN PENSION

Edited by
J. Middleton Murry

JOURNAL
OF KATHERINE MANSFIELD

THE LETTERS
OF KATHERINE MANSFIELD

SELECTED STORIES
OF KATHERINE MANSFIELD

THE ALOE

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By

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Introductory Note

From April 1919 to December 1920 Katherine Mansfield regularly reviewed fiction for *The Athenæum,* giving up only when incapacitated by illness.

Her reviews are here printed in chronological order, since any other arrangement would make meaningless her not infrequent allusions to books previously reviewed, or to her previous reviews of books.

For this reason the attempt to make a selection from them has been abandoned. Taken all together, they form a body of criticism unique in its kind. It is to be regretted that accidents of publication, or editorial necessities, prevented her from giving her opinion on certain eminent novelists. The most notable omissions are H. G. Wells, Arnold Bennett and D. H. Lawrence. In order to give some record at least of her admiration for the work of D. H. Lawrence, a little note pencilled in her copy of *Aaron's Rod,* but not intended for publication, has been included. J. M. M.

Novels and Novelists

THREE WOMEN NOVELISTS

Hope Trueblood . . . . By Patience Worth
The House of Courage . . . By Mrs. Victor Rickard
The Tunnel . . . . . By Dorothy Richardson

Very often, after reading a modern novel, the question suggests itself: Why was it written? And the answer is not always immediate. Indeed, there is no answer; it is perhaps a little reflection on our present authors that there can be so many and of so diverse a kind. One of our famous young novelists half solves the problem for us by stating, in a foreword to his latest book, that he wrote it because he could not help himself, because he was 'compelled' to — but half solves it only. For we cannot help wondering, when the book is finished and laid by, as to the nature of that mysterious compulsion. It is terrifying to think of the number of novels that are written and announced and published and to be had of all libraries, and reviewed and bought and borrowed and read, and left in hotel lounges and omnibuses and railway carriages and deck chairs. Is it possible to believe that each one of them was once the darling offspring of some proud author, — his cherished hope in whom he lives his second richer life?

Public Opinion, garrulous, lying old nurse that she is, cries: 'Yes! Great books, immortal books are being born every minute, each one more lusty than the last. Let him who is without sin among you cast the first criticism.' It would be a superb, thrilling world if this were true! Or if even a very moderate number of them were anything but little puppets, little make-believes, playthings on strings with the same stare and the same sawdust filling, just unlike enough to keep the attention distracted, but all like enough to do nothing more profound. After all, in these lean

years of plenty how could it be otherwise? Not even the most hardened reader, at the rate books are written and read nowadays, could stand up against so many attacks upon his mind and heart, if it were. Reading, for the great majority — for the reading public — is not a passion but a pastime, and writing, for the vast number of modern authors, is a pastime and not a passion.

Miss Patience Worth's 'Hope Trueblood' is almost too good an example of the pastime novel. It never for one moment touches the real world or the realm of fäery, preferring to linger in that 'valley of soft springs' which lies between, where every echo is a sigh, every voice a cry upon the wind, where Melodrama has his castle and Sentimentality is the weeping lady of the tower.

The story is an old one; it is the Bastard's Progress. A little child without a father is left at her mother's death to the cruel mercies of a virtuous village. Although she has the 'sunshine smile' and: 'there is a bud here, I beat my heart over,' she is doomed. She is the little innocent lamb branded with the sign of shame who must be sacrificed. To make this tragedy more pitiful, Miss Worth causes her lamb to speak in a special language, a kind of theatrical *pot-pourri,* and by the time the end is reached there is not a device or an ornament left in the property-box. Even the symbolic white butterfly has flown into the air: 'Up-up-up!' Added to this, Miss Worth has thrown over all a veil of mystery which never is lifted wholly. Now and again a corner flutters, but if we venture to look beneath it is dropped again — and our curiosity with it.

'Can you read this, O reader? Try! Try! for my foolish tears are flowing and I cannot see.' It would require a simple soul indeed to be beguiled by such mock pearls. But we stand amazed before her publisher's announcement. However much support she may need, it is surely unfair to announce her with so extraordinary a flourish of trumpets without. This is lion's music and should be kept for their coming.

Mrs. Victor Rickard is a skilled competent writer of a very dif-

ferent type of book. The theme of her ' House of Courage ' is not new; nor is there, in her treatment of it, a variation with which we have not become familiar during the past four years. There are the opening scenes before the war, light, domestic, carefree, with the principal love interest just beginning, followed by the gathering storm, then the war itself, threatening to destroy everything, but not destroying everything, and then the afterglow, which is like the opening scene, but richer, more sober, and with the principal love interest fulfilled. To write this type of work successfully it is essential that all the characters should be of the same class — the men, well bred, well dressed, and ' thorough sportsmen ' — the women, equally well bred and dressed and the cheeriest of souls. The atmosphere must be an upper middle-class atmosphere and, even if the ' sheer horror of it all ' threatens to engulf them, one golden rule must be observed: they never give way. For these are not real whole people; they are aspects of people, living examples of appropriate and charming behaviour before and during the war. All this Mrs. Rickard knows and understands. From the first paragraph the story flows from her easy pen with unwavering fluency, one of those hundreds of novels which do not send you to sleep, but — do not keep you awake.

Why was it written? The question does not present itself — it is the last question one would ask after reading ' The Tunnel.' Miss Richardson has a passion for registering every single thing that happens in the clear, shadowless country of her mind. One cannot imagine her appealing to the reader or planning out her novel; her concern is primarily, and perhaps ultimately, with herself. ' What cannot I do with this mind of mine! ' one can fancy her saying. ' What can I not see and remember and express? ' There are times when she seems deliberately to set it a task, just for the joy of realizing again how brilliant a machine it is, and we, too, share her admiration for its power of absorbing. Anything that goes into her mind she can summon forth again, and there it

is, complete in every detail, with nothing taken away from it — and nothing added. This is a rare and interesting gift, but we should hesitate before saying it was a great one.

'The Tunnel' is the fourth volume of Miss Richardson's adventures with her soul-sister, Miriam Henderson. Like them, it is composed of bits, fragments, flashing glimpses, half scenes and whole scenes, all of them quite distinct and separate, and all of them of equal importance. There is no plot, no beginning, middle or end. Things just 'happen' one after another with incredible rapidity and at break-neck speed. There is Miss Richardson, holding out her mind, as it were, and there is Life hurling objects into it as fast as she can throw. And at the appointed time Miss Richardson dives into its recesses and reproduces a certain number of these treasures — a pair of button boots, a night in Spring, some cycling knickers, some large, round biscuits — as many as she can pack into a book, in fact. But the pace kills.

There is one who could not live in so tempestuous an environment as her mind — and he is Memory. She has no memory. It is true that Life is sometimes very swift and breathless, but not always. If we are to be truly alive there are large pauses in which we creep away into our caves of contemplation. And then it is, in the silence, that Memory mounts his throne and judges all that is in our minds — appointing each his separate place, high or low, rejecting this, selecting that — putting this one to shine in the light and throwing that one into the darkness.

We do not mean to say that those large, round biscuits might not be in the light, or the night in Spring be in the darkness. Only we feel that until these things are judged and given each its appointed place in the whole scheme, they have no meaning in the world of art.

(*April 4, 1919.*)

TWO NOVELS OF WORTH

Christopher and Columbus . . By the author of 'Elizabeth and her German Garden'

What Not . . . . . By Rose Macaulay

If one pauses to consider the nature of that very considerable number of novels concerned with the fortunes of young females who fly out of the home nest, one is almost tempted to believe that they are written by the forsaken parents themselves. The mind conjures up a vision of those solitary ones sitting by the bedside of their wounded pride, and distracting it from its pains with these horrific tales of the torments and disasters which must inevitably overtake the bold, guilty stray. Who else would find the same gloomy relish in making the very worst of it — in picturing a path one simply cannot see for lions? Who else would dare to end upon that lullaby note — with such a sting in it! — the peaceful, happy ending with the good simple man whom she might, far more suitably and comfortably, have met in her own mother's drawing-room?

One likes to think that the escaped children are too happy to bother about proving their parents to be wrong. Nevertheless, one does wish sometimes that their song was not quite without words. True, no bird, however golden, flies fully fledged from the nest up into the sun. But trying your wings, so long as you are perfectly certain that you have wings to try, so long as you are confident that you fall only to rise again, and that all these little essays and flutters are but the prelude to exquisite flight, need not of necessity be tragic.

Christopher and Columbus, the twin orphans and heroines of 'Elizabeth's' novel, are, indeed, the most unconscious but radiant little proofs to the contrary, in spite of the fact that they do not fly of their own accord, but are quite unmercifully thrown at a tender age, at just seventeen, with their hair still in gold and silver

pigtails and with ' perambulator faces,' from England to America, in the middle of the war, by that loyal British citizen their Uncle Arthur.

It is true, the poor man had provocation. For although they had been brought up to love England and Milton and Wordsworth above all other loves by their mother, Uncle Arthur's sister-in-law, they were the children of a German father, a von Twinkler. And whenever they opened their mouths, which was very often, out their disgraceful r's came rolling right under the infinitely suspicious and patriotic noses of Uncle Arthur's friends. This was not to be borne; Uncle Arthur did not bear it. He equipped them with two introductions, two hundred pounds and two second-class fares, and sent them flying. The delightful miracle is that, helped by Mr. Twist, of Twist's Non-Trickler Teapot fame, from the very first moment they flew.

We shudder to think what might have happened had the twins not been twins, but Anna-Rose and Anna-Felicitas rolled into one, and had Mr. Twist not been ' a born mother.' America certainly did not help them. That great heart beat very fast and hard at the sight of their innocence and childish unbroken courage, but curiosity, suspicion and the tingling air of scandal set it going; America turned her broad back, but looked over her shoulder and coldly, frigidly stared. So well is the devastating quality of that glance conveyed that it might serve as a warning never to go to America with nothing but your own watery reflection in the mirror for prop and comfort, for a shadow twin, as it were, and never to find yourself in America with a young man who does not glory, as Mr. Twist gloried, in the fact of his being a mother.

But, after all, when the triumph of the twins is complete even to wedding bells, these two advantages, great as they are, do not explain it wholly. Above and through everything runs their laughter — their laughing comment upon the grown-up world and its ways. And this it is which is irresistible.

We are still very dazed, very dumb and stiff after the four years' winter sleep; the winter has lasted too long; our sleep has been like death. We are dazed creatures, 'lizards of convalescence,' creeping back into the sun. And then, in the quiet, we hear Christopher and Columbus laughing — laughing at everything. Is it not cruel to make merry after such a winter? But they themselves are spring. Round-eyed and even a little unsteady, they wander among these preposterous grown-ups, the big, fat, cold-blooded ones and the lean elderly prying ones, never dreaming that these same grown-ups could, in an instant, turn — not into lions, perhaps, but into malignant toads and spiders.

'Elizabeth' appreciates their danger, for the minds of toads and spiders are open books to her. But having them by heart, she, with her delicate impatient pen, is not in the least tempted to make a solemn copy of them. All that she wants she can convey with a comment — at a stroke. There is a whole volume for one of our psychological authors in Mr. Twist's quarrel with his mother; she dismisses it in a little chapter.

And therein perhaps lies her value as a writer; she is, in the happiest way, conscious of her own particular vision, and she wants no other. She is so enchanted with the flowers growing in the path she has chosen that she has not, as the twins might say, a 'single eye to spare' for her neighbours. In a world where there are so many furies with warning fingers it is good to know of someone who goes on her way finding a gay garland, and not forgetting to add a sharp-scented spray or two and a bitter herb that its sweetness may not cloy.

'What Not,' Miss Rose Macaulay's brilliant little comedy, is played in a vastly different world. One does not dream of questioning the large freedoms enjoyed by the heroine, Miss Kitty Grammont; one can only admire her excellent control of them. Dare we hope that this fascinating creature is the fore-runner of the business woman, the 'political' woman, the woman whose

business it is to help to govern the country? Miss Macaulay presents us to her when she is attached to the Ministry of Brains — a vast organization which has been started after the war to control, stimulate, reward and punish the brains of the nation, and to safeguard the intellects of the Great Unborn. The wonderful system of classificaton with which we have become so familiar serves this time a twofold purpose; it not only registers the mental category of every man and woman in England, it also tells him or her whom to marry and whom not to marry. Miss Grammont, whose brains were of the highest order, was classified 'A'; but the Minister of Brains, for all his brilliant powers, was uncertificated for matrimonial purposes because of mental deficiency in his family. He was 'A' (Deficiency), and thereby hangs the tale. Moving spirits though they are of Brains Week, the Mental Progress Act, the Mind Training Bill and the great Explanation Campaign, they find their official co-partnership inadequate, and as though these obstacles were nothing more than convenient stiles to lean across, like any simple two, they fall in love. Realizing 'it will come out as certainly as flowers in spring or the Clyde engineers next week,' they marry. And it does come out. The dreadful truth wrecks the Ministry of Brains and ruins their careers, but leaves them 'laughing ruefully.'

This is the bare theme from which Miss Macaulay composes her ingenious and delightful variations. Although one feels her fertility of invention is so great that nothing would be easier for her than to obtain an 'easy effect,' it is their chief excellence that each one is as unexpected as the last. It is only in the enjoyment of Miss Macaulay's nice sense of humour, matched with her fine, sensitive style, that one realizes how rarely the two qualities are found together. We are so accustomed to the horse without the rider, roaming very free, or the rider very desperate, looking for the horse.

(*April 4, 1919.*)

A CITIZEN OF THE SEA

Old Junk . . . . . By H. M. Tomlinson

There are times when one is tempted to make a kind of childish division of mankind into two groups and to say: 'These are the men who live on the land and these are they whose home is the sea.' Is the division quite idle? Perhaps it were better to say: 'These are the men who are ruled by the land and these who are governed by the sea.' For you may meet the citizens of the sea far away from their own kingdom, carried away, to all outward resemblance, and absorbed by the immediate life of the land, yet are they never other than foreigners; their glance, however keen and discerning, still is a wondering glance; and what they discover is not the familiarity of things, but their strangeness. They see it all like this because they have just 'come off the ship,' as it were. For long they have been identified with the moving waters, the changing skies, winds, stars, the dawn running into bright day, and evening falling on the fields of night. This is the life, changing, but ever changeless, in which men live nearest to that which enchants them, and to that which threatens to overwhelm them. Here the terrible monotony of ceaseless distraction is unknown; neither can men die that wilful first death to all outward things as they can on land — refusing to look any longer upon the sky or to care whether the wind be foul or fair. But through everything it is the calmness of those sea-governed men which compels us most. Shall we of the land ever be calm again? Shall we ever find our way out of this hideous Exhibition with its lights and bands and wounded soldiers and German guns? There is a quivering madness in all this feverish activity. Perhaps we are afraid that when we do reach the last turnstile we shall push one another over the edge of the world, into space — into darkness.

It is at times like these that we find it extraordinary comfort to have in our midst a citizen of the sea, a writer like Mr. H. M.

Tomlinson. We feel that he is calm, not because he has renounced life, but because he lives in the memory of that solemn gesture with which the sea blesses or dismisses or destroys her own. The breath of the sea sounds in all his writings. Whether he tells of an accident at a mine-head, or the front-line trenches in Flanders, or children dancing, or books to read at midnight — if we listen, it is there and we are not deceived. There is a quality of remoteness and detachment in his work, but it is never because he has turned aside from life. On the contrary he steps ashore and is passionately involved in it. Deliberately he enters into the anguish of experience and suffering; he gives himself to it because of his great love for human beings; yet the comfort of being 'lost' — of being just a part of the whole and merged in it — is denied him. He is always that foreigner with keen wondering glance, thinking over the strangeness of it all. . . .

And when life is not tragic, when children dance, or he visits the African Coast, or a lonely little grocer's boy shows him his home-made 'wireless,' then are we conscious of his unbroken, unspoilt joy in lovely things and funny ones. He is alive; real things stir him profoundly. He has no need to exaggerate or heighten his effects. One is content to believe that what he tells you happened to him and it was the important thing; it was the spiritual truth which was revealed. This is the life, changeless and changing, wonderfully conveyed to us in the pages of 'Old Junk.' There is a quality in the prose that one might wish to call 'magic'; it is full of the quivering light and rainbow colours of the unsubstantial shore. One might dream as one puts the book down that one has only to listen, to hear the tide, on the turn, then sweeping in full and strong.

(*April 18, 1919.*)

PORTRAIT OF A LITTLE LADY

My War Experiences in Two Continents.

By S. Macnaughtan

In the beginning of this book there is a portrait of a little lady sitting upright and graceful in a high-backed chair. She wears an old-world, silk brocade gown fastened with a row of little buttons. There is fine lace at the neck, and a delicate scarf slips from her shoulders. As she leans her cheek on two fingers her intent, unsmiling gaze is very gentle. But her eyes and lips — typical Northern eyes and lips — challenge her air of sheltered leisure. It would be hard to deceive those eyes — they are steady, shrewd and far-seeing; and one feels that the word that issues from those firm determined lips would be her bond.

It is the portrait of Miss Macnaughtan, who gave the last two years of her life, from July 1914 to September 1916, to suffering humanity, and died as the result of the hardships she endured.

There were women whom nobody had ever 'wanted,' young women who longed to put their untried strength to the test, women who never kindled except at the sight of helplessness and suffering, vain women whose one desire was to be important, and unimaginative women who craved a sporting adventure — for all of them the war unlocked the gates of Life, and they entered in and breathed the richer air and were content at last.

How different was Miss Macnaughtan's case! She was one of those admirable single Englishwomen whose lives seem strangely fulfilled and complete. She had a home she loved, many friends, leisure for her work, a feeling for life that was a passion, and an immense capacity for happiness. But the war came to her, locking the gates of Life. 'I think something in me has stood still or died,' she confessed.

Except for a few family letters, her experiences in Belgium, North France, Russia, and on the Persian front are written in the

form of a diary. But though one feels that her deliberate aim was to set down faithfully what she saw — the result is infinitely more than that. It is a revelation of her inner self which would perhaps never have been revealed in times less terrible and strange. For though her desire for expression was imperative and throughout the book there are signs of the writer's 'literary' longing to register the moment, the glimpse, the scene, it is evident that she had no wish to let her reserved, fastidious personality show through. It happened in spite of her, and there she is for all time, elderly, frail, with her terrible capacity for suffering, her love for humanity, her pride in being 'English,' and her burning zeal to sacrifice herself for those who are broken; not because of their weakness, but because they have been strong. Perhaps above all things she loves the Northern courage, not only to endure, but to hide suffering behind a bright shield. But the war makes her cry:

> It *isn't right*. This damage to human life is horrible. It is madness to slaughter these thousands of young men. Almost at last, in a rage, one feels inclined to cry out against the sheer imbecility of it. The pain of it is all too much. I am *sick* of seeing suffering.

And:

> . . . Above all, one feels — at least I do — that one is always, and quite palpably, in the shadow of the death of youth — beautiful youth, happy and healthy and free. Always I seem to see the white faces of boys turned up to the sky, and I hear their cries and see the agony which youth was never meant to bear. They are too young for it, far too young; but they lie out on the field . . . and bite the mud in their frenzy of pain; and they call for their mothers and no one comes. . . . Who can listen to a boy's groans and his shrieks of pain? This is war.

Again:

> A million more men are needed — thus the fools called men talk. But youth looks up with haggard eyes, and youth, grown old, knows that Death alone is merciful.

As one reads on one becomes more and more aware how unfitted by nature Miss Macnaughtan was for the great part which she accepted and played so magnificently. Nothing short of rude youth could have stood the wet and cold, lack of sleep, horrible food, agonizing discomfort at the little railway station where she chopped up vegetables for soup, journeys that (only to read of) are a torment. But she was always ill; she loathed communal life with its meanness, pettiness, scandal and muddling untidiness. How can people behave like this — at such a time? she seems to cry. And little by little her weariness turns to disgust and she cannot bear it. She sorrowfully turns aside — all her love goes out to suffering youth. Nothing else matters.

> I wish I could give my life for some boy who would like to live very much, and to whom all things are joyous. But alas! one can't swop lives like this. . . .

When she writes that, she is dying. Her journal ends with the words:

> I should like to have left the party — quitted the feast of life — when all was gay and amusing. I should have been sorry to come away, but it would have been far better than being left till all the lights are out. I could have said truly to the Giver of the feast, ' Thanks for an excellent time.' But now so many of the guests have left, and the fires are going out, and I am tired.

What is heroism? There was a time when one had the easy belief that heroes and heroines were a radiant few who were born brave, and the reason why they did not shrink or turn aside from their

lonely, perilous path was that they were blind to the shadows. They had lifted their eyes; they had seen their star, and their joyful feet ran in the light of it to some high, mysterious triumph.

But our silver heroes and heroines glitter no longer. Gone is that shining band of knights and ladies. We know better, turning aside from their lifeless perfections as 'bad' children do from a 'good' fairy book that has all the old stories, but with the wolves and witches and wicked giants left out. We have learned that the final sticking of the dragon counts for almost nothing; it is in the fighting that has gone before against Fear and his shadowy army, against the dark hosts of Imagination and the blacker hosts of Reality, that true heroes and heroines are discovered. They are not born brave, and perhaps the burning star is not other than their own spirit, bright and solitary in the incomprehensible darkness of their being. For common men there is a star that beckons; these chosen ones live by a light, yet they are not led.

(*April 25, 1919.*)

A VICTORIAN JUNGLE

The Gay-Dombeys . . . . By Sir Harry Johnston

It is not without a tinge of malicious satisfaction that we realize there are delights reserved for us elderly creatures which are quite out of sight, out of reach, of the golden boys and girls who are making so wonderfully free of our apples and pears and plums. Perhaps one of the rarest and most delicious is meeting with an old playfellow who is just come from the country of our childhood, and having an endless talk with him about what is changed and what is the same — whether the Allens still live in the same house, what has become of the huge Molesworth family, and was the mystery of old Anderson ever solved?

We shall never see these people again; we shall share nothing

more with them. We shall never push open their garden gates and smell our way past the flower bushes to the white verandahs where they sit gossiping in the velvet moonlight. Why should we feel then this passionate interest? Is it because, prisoners as we are, we love to feel we have inhabited other lives — lived more lives than one — or we are reluctant to withdraw wholly because of that whispered word 'Finis' which locks the doors against us, one by one, for ever?

The memory of our childhood is like 'the memory of a tale that is told,' and the delight of talking over with a boon companion a book you have read in the long ago is hardly less real. It is not very different; you are both left wondering. What happened 'after that'? Does the author know? Or does he — wonder too? What would Dickens say if he read Sir Harry Johnston's 'Gay-Dombeys,' which continues the history of the Dombey family and their circle through the Victorian period and into our own times, with wonderful elaborateness and excursions and allusions such as their author loved, and with a canvas so crowded that you have to stand on tiptoe and look over people's shoulders and under their arms and round them before you can be perfectly sure that you have seen everybody who is there?

We can think of no other author who took a final farewell of his characters with greater reluctance than did Dickens. His meanest villains were, after all, citizens of his world, and as such they stumbled and were up again, to be nearly caught, and again escaped before he could bear to let them go for ever. As to those whom he loved — and in whom he lived — it was anguish to him to submit to their passing. 'Shall I never be that dying boy again, waving my hand at the water on the wall? Never be again the child-wife, Little Blossom, asking if my poor boy is very lonely downstairs?' And so the boat puts back once more for one last sob, one last gush of tears. Even the survivors were not allowed to gather without one final Grand Tableau before the fall of the

curtain, which is intended for an abiding proof for him and for us that they are still there, still going on, still extravagantly, abundantly alive. It is this extraordinary delight in the exuberance of life, in its endless possibilities of such complications and combinations, that Sir Harry Johnston shares with Dickens. We are inclined to believe that his fantastic choice of characters is due to his recognition of Dickens as a fellow passionate explorer, with London for a dark continent, and surely as strange a collection of animals as could be discovered in any jungle to wonder at, to watch, and to track to their lairs. It is certain that they both have the peculiarly English gift (which foreigners call our 'indifference') of accepting the strange thing in all its strangeness, presenting it with all the freakish detail left in, and of being 'at home' anywhere they may choose to feel 'at home.'

But the author of 'The Gay-Dombeys' is far too much the born writer to put on the manner of the author of 'Dombey and Son.' To be carried away by him in the good old-fashioned style that your modern writer would think shame to attempt, you must admit that the Dickens world existed as part of the real world, and there is no reason why Mr. Arthur Balfour should not discuss theology with Mrs. Humphrey Ward at one of Florence Gay-Dombey's parties in her Morris drawing-room in Onslow Square. Why not? And is not Sir Harry Johnston justified in portraying real personalities of the period by the fact that, for the reader, they are never quite so convincing as the unreal. Indeed, there comes ever a moment in the life of your confirmed reader when he catches himself murmuring: 'Who shall say which is which . . . ?' This novel is full of such moments. Nevertheless, it is no hunting-ground for scandalmongers; they may stand up to the canvas as close as they like; the style of the painting is too large, too happy, and too free to feed the prying eye.

It would be difficult to tell the story, for the story is made up of stories, each as separate as flowers on a tree, and all contributing

to the delightful effect. One pauses, wondering which to gather; but no — they make so satisfactory a whole that it were useless to attempt to choose. Perhaps the finest bloom is Lady Feenix's friendship with Eustace Morven. But that is because she is such an adorable woman — and adorable women are still a little painfully rare.

(*May 2, 1919.*)

INARTICULATIONS

The Moon and Sixpence . . . By W. S. Maugham

Had Mr. Maugham confessed to his hero Charles Strickland, a painter of genius, his great desire to present him, to explain him to the public, with all his eccentricities, violences and odious ways included, we imagine the genius would have retorted in his sardonic way: ' Go to hell. Let them look at my pictures or not look at them — damn them. My painting is all there is to me.' This discouraging reply is not without a large grain of truth. Strickland cut himself off from the body of life, clumsily, obstinately, savagely — hacking away, regardless of torn flesh and quivering nerves, like some old Maori warrior separating himself from a shattered limb with a piece of sharp shell. What proof have we that he suffered? No proof at all. On the contrary, each fresh ugly blow wrung a grin or chuckle from him, but never the slightest sign that he would have had it otherwise if he could.

If we had his pictures before us, or the memory of them in our mind's eye, this his state of mind might be extremely illuminating, but without them, with nothing to reinforce our knowledge of him but a description of two or three which might apply equally well to a very large number of modern works, we are left strangely unsatisfied. The more so in that Mr. Maugham takes

extraordinary pains in explaining to us that Strickland is no imaginary character. His paintings are known everywhere, everywhere acclaimed. Books have been written about him in English and French and German. He even goes so far as to give us the author's and the publishers' names — well-known live publishers who would surely never allow their names to be taken in vain. So it comes to this. If Strickland is a real man and this book a sort of guide to his works, it has its value; but if Mr. Maugham is merely pulling our critical leg it will not do. Then, we are not told enough. We must be shown something of the workings of his mind; we must have some comment of his upon what he feels, fuller and more exhaustive than his perpetual: 'Go to hell.' It is simply essential that there should be some quality in him revealed to us that we may love, something that will stop us for ever from crying: 'If you have to be so odious before you can paint bananas — pray leave them unpainted.'

Here are the facts. Charles Strickland, a middle-aged stockbroker, the husband of a charming cultured woman and the father of two typically nice English children, suddenly, on a day, without a hint of warning, leaves his home and business and goes off to Paris to paint. The reason is unthinkable. A sturdy, ruddy middle-aged man cannot so utterly change his nature. He can; he does. Living in poverty, great untidiness and discomfort, he renounces his old life and seemingly never gives it another thought. For the moment he sheds that respectable envelope and is away, it is no longer part of his new self. He is grown out of its roundness and firmness and is become a lean pale creature with a great red beard, a hooked nose and thick sensual lips, possessed with one passion, ravaged by one desire — to paint great pictures. Paris he accepts as though he had always known it. He lives the life of its disreputable quarters as though he had been brought up in them and adopts its ugly ways with a kind of fiendish glee. Then he is discovered, half dead of a fever, by a

stupid kind-hearted little Dutchman who takes him into his flat and nurses him. The adored gentle wife of the Dutchman falls under Strickland's spell and ruins her life for him. When he is sick of her (for his contempt for women is fathomless) she takes poison and dies. And Strickland, his sexual appetite satisfied, 'smiles dryly and pulls his beard.'

Finally, he leaves Paris and makes his home in Tahiti. Here he goes native, living in a remote hut with a black woman and her relatives, and painting masterpieces until his body takes its great and final revenge upon his spirit and he becomes a leper. He lives for years, painting the walls of his house. When he is dying he makes his black wife promise to burn the house down so that the pictures may be destroyed. 'His life was complete. He had made a world and saw that it was good. Then, in pride and contempt, he destroyed it.'

This strange story is related by a friend of Mrs. Strickland's, a young, rather priggish author, who is sent over to Paris after the first tragedy to discover with whom Strickland has eloped and whether he can be induced to return.

> 'You won't go back to your wife?' I said at last.
>
> 'Never.'
>
> '. . . She'll never make you a single reproach.'
>
> 'She can go to hell.'
>
> 'You don't care if people think you an utter blackguard? You don't care if she and her children have to beg their bread?'
>
> 'Not a damn.'

That is very typical of their conversations together. Indeed, the young man confesses that if Strickland is a great deal more articulate than that, he has put the words into his mouth — divined them from his gestures. 'From his own conversation I was able to glean nothing.' And 'his real life consisted of dreams and of tremendously hard work.' But where are the dreams?

Strickland gives no hint of them; the young man makes no attempt to divine them. 'He asked nothing from his fellows except that they should leave him alone. He was single-hearted in his aim, and to pursue it he was willing to sacrifice not only himself — many can do that — but others. . . .' But what does the sacrifice matter if you do not care a rap whether the creature on the altar is a little horned ram or your only beloved son?

The one outstanding quality in Strickland's nature seems to have been his contempt for life and the ways of life. But contempt for life is not to be confused with liberty, nor can the man whose weapon it is fight a tragic battle or die a tragic death. If to be a great artist were to push over everything that comes in one's way, topple over the table, lunge out right and left like a drunken man in a café and send the pots flying, then Strickland was a great artist. But great artists are not drunken men; they are men who are divinely sober. They know that the moon can never be bought for sixpence, and that liberty is only a profound realization of the greatness of the dangers in their midst.

(*May 9, 1919.*)

THE PUBLIC SCHOOL MIXTURE

Loose Ends . . . . . By Arnold Lunn

In attempting to make a novel out of his ideas on public school education, Mr. Lunn has set himself a peculiarly difficult task. This is, chiefly, because he knows his subject so well from the point of view of the boy as well as that of the master, and his sympathies are so nicely divided between them that he is unsatisfied if he does not convey both. He succeeds, but his success breaks his book into halves, and we cannot quite see how it can fail to have the same effect upon his public.

Who but little boys could take a lively interest in the play and

chatter of little men of thirteen upwards, could exult in the way they routed old Slimy:

> Phillips looked Slimy up and down. He gazed at his hair, his face and his feet.
>
> 'Slimy dear,' he said with deliberate and cold-blooded contempt, 'you smell. Your feet stink. We don't want you. Get out, and leave the door open behind you to air the room. . . .'

— could burn with indignation at the rotten shame it was that old Tom didn't get his colours and Burton did, could relish to the full the exquisite joke of bringing the Museum baboon into the class-room of the short-sighted master, or could squeeze the last drop of enjoyment from:

> Jack's cricket was meteoric. He was a fast but indifferent bowler, a brilliant but not very reliable bat. The local yeomen who watched the school matches from behind the palings greeted his boundaries with full-throated enthusiasm, and his 'ducks' with noisy grief. No member of the school side could score so rapidly as Jack when he was in form, and none were more subjected to periodic runs of bad luck.

But the roaring conversations, debates and sets-to between 'unconventional' masters, whose pipes are always going out and who have a way of signifying their pleasure or displeasure by 'inarticulate noises,' would leave the juvenile reader dreadfully cold. And the vague sad fears of gentle, thoughtful Mother Helen that her boy is hers no longer — not wholly hers (can she win him back by taking a house on the river for his summer 'hols' and reading Swinburne to him in the punt?) — would leave him, if possible, colder still.

We are put to it to imagine whom these situations would warm and vivify, especially the former one — the young schoolmaster, rampant, in the old traditional school. What original fire it had

has kindled many torches of late; it would need a powerful breath to blow the flame clear and shining again. Beautiful, gentle Helen, mother of the hero, in spite of the fact that she reads Mr. Masefield and has her very own opinion of Dickens and Mr. Arnold Bennett, is never more than a shadow. Were the light to fall upon her one instant, she would be gone.

The book opens with a discourse by the author upon 'that most obstinately English of English families — the Chattel Leighs. It is typical of the family that they have never hyphened their double name and never dropped the Chattel.' Conscientious, hard-headed, reserved and discreet, they are chosen for the hero's ancestors on the paternal side. Philip Chattel Leigh, father of Maurice, is indeed an astonishing reproduction of a Royal Academy portrait of an English gentleman. He is complete even to the little scene in the consulting room of the 'eminent specialist,' where he receives his sentence of death.

> 'I think the end will be sudden, perhaps almost painless.'
>
> Philip pulled out his notebook. 'I'll jot down a note or two,' he said calmly, 'it's as well to make no mistake. Possibly two years, six months probably. Let's see, what about smoking? . . .'
>
> 'Yes, smoke by all means in moderation.'
>
> Philip rose briskly. 'Well, Sir Horace, thank you for your sympathy. I know your time is valuable. The trees are coming out nicely, aren't they?'

His wife, daughter of a bookish father, 'led a life of restrained happiness and entertained his friends with that tranquil serenity that was her most distinctive charm.' But she kept 'the intangible life of books' away from her husband, and when he returned from his work she 'listened patiently but with intelligence.'

They have two sons. Tom, the elder, is his father over again, but Maurice is cast in another mould.

> He clung to his mother, appealed to her for sympathy, thought aloud when he was with her, and gave to Helen that unique joy that belongs to those who know they have the power of shaping and moulding a human soul.

Her 'unique joy' is short-lived. At eight years of age he goes off to a 'Priver'; at thirteen he joins Tom at Hornborough and becomes a public school man. What is the effect of the Public School system upon a boy who 'worships at the shrine of physical fitness,' and yet has 'discovered that poetry not only unlocks new aspects of beauty, but that it serves as a key to those forgotten chambers of the soul where beauty once perceived . . . slumbers till the magic numbers waken her to life once more'? For the purposes of his experiment, Mr. Lunn selects two friends for him — Jack Spence, who stands for the life of the body and whose batting thrills him to the bone, and Quirk, the revolutionary schoolmaster, who makes Shakespeare live again and leads Maurice from Kipling to Conrad, higher still and higher.

We cannot see that it has any effect upon him at all. The Chattel Leigh in him makes him moderately good at games, and enthusiastic enough over 'footer pots'; his mother's literary tastes keep him from narrow-mindedness or from being feverishly interested in knowing what a concubine is. In fact, he comes out by the same door as in he went, with Jack still his friend, Quirk his master, and his mother waiting, hoping still.

Is Mr. Lunn administering a powder? But if the powder is to be disguised, surely it is not too much to ask that the jam should be really good jam — none of your familiar mixtures from a dreary pot, but some exquisite preserve of the author's — black cherry, Frimley peach, sharp, sweet quince.

The dose is large; jam *qua* jam, alas! excites us no longer. We cannot help feeling that Mr. Lunn expects of us an innocence of appetite which is very rare.

(*May 16, 1919.*)

A BOUQUET

Pink Roses . . . . . By Gilbert Cannan

It seems that the curtain has hardly fallen upon his last appearance, but here is Mr. Cannan on the stage again. Again, with charming bravery he faces the lights, the music, the humming, hungry audience. What has he to offer? What new impersonation, what fresh, original 'turn'? And are we to discover, behind him, a vast bounding landscape, very rich in light and shadow, or something gay, exquisite, dotted with bright colours like fruits, with just a line of sea to give him his far horizon? . . .

Trevor Mathew, denied the Great Adventure because of a systolic murmur of the heart, 'was beginning to think he was losing his sense of humour.' 'He sat down in a hard green garden chair.' . . . 'Fifteen yards away from him a girl was sitting' . . . 'her eyes were fixed on him' . . . 'her left eyelid drooped, and she gave an inviting jerk of the head' . . . 'Never in his life had Trevor spoken to an unknown lady.' 'Their chairs had been fifteen yards apart. He kept exactly' (note that: as Dostoevsky would have said) 'fifteen yards behind her. As she reached Hyde Park Corner she stopped. He stopped, too, fifteen yards behind her.' And so into the Café Claribel, where he sat at a table 'fifteen yards away.'

It is surely evident from this remarkable opening, with its ever so simple refrain of 'Fifteen yards away,' that our expert performer is grown ambitious of attracting the sympathies of a larger, simpler audience than was his formerly. But we must go carefully; there may be more in this than meets the astonished eye.

> How friendly her smile was! How charming to be in sympathy with another human being *fifteen yards away*. He did not wish it to be any nearer, nor did he desire the adventure to proceed any further. On the other hand he would not have

it come to an end. As it was it had in it an exquisite quality of happiness, of fulfilment, of poignancy — just a hint. He did not require more.

Let us be just to Mr. Cannan. If this exact measurement can convey happiness, fulfilment, just a hint of poignancy even, he cannot have marked it off so lightly. These be no common garden fifteen yards. May they not be the shy beginnings of a courtship between Science and Literature — the measuring of fifteen yards of soul? . . .

Our tentative question is almost answered on the very next page: ' I never thought I should be happy again.' It seemed to him that ' he was wronging his friends to be made happy by such a little thing as the scent and sweetness of a nosegay of fresh roses ' . . . How far away? Come, we all know it by this time. Now ladies and gentlemen, please, once more, and all together, *' fifteen yards away.'*

This new sense in our hero makes us eager for a fuller description of him. . . . ' As he had an ample allowance the rise in prices did not affect him at all, and he remained untouched, always perfectly dressed and careful to eat in the atmosphere to which he was accustomed. . . . It was not that he did not notice shabbiness. He did, especially in boots, but he put it down to slovenliness. He was an only son.'

Here, again, you observe, the apparently innocent statement is broken in upon very strangely by the ' especially in boots,' and the sudden hammer-like stroke, ' he was an only son.' Did the boots also have to be a certain distance away before — but to return to our Pink Roses.

Trevor did not see the lady again until one evening outside the café, when he bought a pup, ' fortunately a male,' from an old man. She was standing by, and the innocent creature broke the ice between them; in two minutes he was in her flat and telling

her, 'I wanted to stay at Cambridge. I could easily have got a Fellowship. I did History in my first two years and got a First. I wanted to go on with it, but my governor insisted on my taking Law. I got a First in that, too, but there isn't much Law in practising. I mean it isn't often you get a legal point. . . . Her lips were parted, her eyes shone, her bosom rose and fell.' Until, 'suddenly in Trevor there came tumbling in a series of swift painful realizations that this evening was somehow very important, and that it was what he had been waiting for through the weary months of almost catalepsy. It was his chance to assert himself, to break his arranged life that was left untouched when all other arranged lives had been broken.' . . .

And thus, to heal his hurt, to make him forget his too infinitely cherished friends whom the war had broken, that he might be 'disturbed out of the nauseated lethargy in which his grief had left him' and 'have something working in his soul to withstand the corrosion of the war,' excusing himself 'on the ground that it was better for his mother to have him restored to some kind of sanity, than reduced to a frozen and insensible imbecility by the mental strain which was as bad, if not worse, than the physical strain of the trenches,' the brilliant, captivating young Cambridge man decides to allow the frail but doting lady to love him for one whole year. Why not? 'She was so completely, even abjectly, his, as to give him an indomitable sense of possession. She was as much his as the pup . . .' And Mr. Cannan is sure enough of himself to cry for his hero, 'After that the deluge.'

But not even the sure hand of our author can make a whole satisfying meal of such an intimacy, complete with its trip to Brighton and pink satin bedroom bows, enriched by a coloured maid, a magnificent motor-car, a black chauffeur, and two comic Jews. Let us hasten to assure the reader that other meats are provided; the table veritably groans under hearty English fare. Here is the lawyer's office, dusty, traditional, with its pompous old chief

and the case that never is settled; here the rosy-cheeked, silver-haired mother who trusts her boy; here the girl whose grey eyes 'cannot but look direct,' and who is to have what is left of Trevor after the Lady of the Roses has taught him all there is to know about women; here is the foolish old inventor in his 'tattered and stained dressing-gown,' whose explosions blow off 'one eyebrow'; and everywhere there are large slabs of war-time conversation for ravenous youth to munch between the courses. None but the dainty or the rich need go empty away.

Surely it is a little pity that the very unpleasant subject of the war should find a place in all this plenty. Need we be told of these twinges of indigestion suffered by our hero as he takes a bite of now this — now that? They are never more than slight twinges, never serious pangs, and as often as not cured by a chuckle. But their effect is, somehow, disastrous upon the fragile, fast-fading flowers behind which Mr. Cannan has chosen to make his bow.

(*May 23, 1919.*)

A CHILD AND HER NOTE-BOOK

The Young Visiters or Mr. Salteena's Plan

By Daisy Ashford

This is the story of Mr. Salteena's plan to become a real gentleman ('I am quite alright as they say but I would like to be the real thing can it be done he added slapping his knees . . .'), of his unrequited love for fair and flighty Ethel Monticue, of Bernard Clark's dashing and successful wooing of Ethel, together with some very rich, costly pictures of High Socierty, a levie at Buckingham Palace, a description of the Compartments at the Chrystal Palace occupied by Earls and Dukes, and a very surprising account of the goings on at the Gaierty Hotel. It is one of the most breathless novels we have ever read, for the entirely

unmerciful and triumphant author seems to realize from the very first moment that she can do what she likes with us, and so we are flung into the dazzling air with Bernard and Ethel, and dashed to earth with poor Mr. Salteena, without the relief of one dull moment. Happily, there are only twelve chapters; for human flesh and blood could stand no more — at any rate grown-up human flesh and blood. For, as far as we can judge from the portrait of the nine-year-old author, this rate of living did not upset her in the least; she positively throve on it and could have sustained it for ever.

At first glance Daisy Ashford may appear very sophisticated. There is evidence that she thoroughly enjoyed the run of her parents' library, and, unseen and unheard, revelled in the conversation of her elders. Signs are not wanting that she enjoyed exceptional opportunities for looking through keyholes, peeping through half-open doors, gazing over the banisters at the group in the hall below, and sitting, squeezed and silent, between the grown-ups when they took the air in the 'baroushe.'

But for all her dressing up in Ouida's plumy hat and long skirt with a train, she remains a little child with a little child's vision of her particular world. That she managed to write it down and make a whole round novel of it is a marvel almost too good to be true. But there it is, and even while the grown-up part of us is helpless with laughter we leap back with her into our nine-year-old self where the vision is completely real and satisfying.

Who among us *à cet âge-là* has not smiled through his fingers at Ethel Monticue, overheard at a party:

> What plesand compartments you have cried Ethel in rarther a societry tone.
>
> Fairly so so responded the Earl do you live in London he added in a loud tone as someone was playing a very difficult piece on the piano.

Well no I dont said Ethel my home is really in Northumberland but I am at present stopping with Mr. Clark at the Gaierty Hotel she continued in a somewhat showing off tone.

Oh I see said the earl well shall I introduce you to a few of my friends.

Oh please do said Ethel with a dainty blow at her nose.

It has been questioned whether the book is not an elaborate hoax; but if one remembers the elaborate games one played at that age, the characters that were invented, the situations and scenes — games that continued for days and days, and were actually unwritten novels in their way — one finds no difficulty in believing in the amazing child. One only rushes to rejoice in her and to advise our old young men when they approach the more solemn parts of their serious adventures to take a dip into her 'plan' and see how it should be done.

(*May 30, 1919.*)

A NOVEL WITHOUT A CRISIS

Heritage . . . . . By V. Sackville West

On page 3 of her novel Miss Sackville West makes an interesting comment:

I should like to explain here that those who look for facts and events as the central points of significance in a tale will be disappointed. On the other hand I may fall upon an audience which, like myself, contends that the vitality of human beings is to be judged less by their achievement than by their endeavour, by the force of their emotion rather than by their success.

These are not extraordinary words; but we are inclined to think they contain the reason for the author's failure to make important a book which has many admirable qualities.

If we are not to look for facts and events in a novel — and why should we? — we must be very sure of finding those central points of significance transferred to the endeavours and emotions of the human beings portrayed. For, having decided on the novel form, one cannot lightly throw one's story over the mill without replacing it with another story which is, in its way, obedient to the rules of that discarded one. There must be the same setting out upon a voyage of discovery (but through unknown seas instead of charted waters), the same difficulties and dangers must be encountered, and there must be an ever-increasing sense of the greatness of the adventure and an ever more passionate desire to possess and explore the mysterious country. There must be given the crisis when the great final attempt is made which succeeds — or does not succeed. Who shall say?

The crisis, then, is the chief of our 'central points of significance' and the endeavours and the emotions are stages on our journey towards or away from it. For without it, the form of the novel, as we see it, is lost. Without it, how are we to appreciate the importance of one 'spiritual event' rather than another? What is to prevent each being unrelated — complete in itself — if the gradual unfolding in growing, gaining light is not to be followed by one blazing moment?

We may look in vain for such a moment in 'Heritage.' It abounds in points of significance, but there is no central point. After an excellent first chapter — an excellent approach — we begin almost immediately to feel that the author, in dividing her story as she does between two tellers, has let it escape from her control. And as one reads on the feeling becomes more and more urgent: there is nobody in control. Her fine deliberate style is, as it were, wilfully abused by the two tellers; they use it to prove

much that is irrelevant; they make it an excuse for lingering and turning aside when everything was to be gained by going forward — until finally, between them they break the book into pieces, not harshly or madly, but by a kind of delicate, persistent tugging, until there is a piece of Sussex, a fragment of Italy, some letters from the war, a long episode in Ephesus, fine, light, glowing pieces — each one, if we examine closely, a complete little design in itself.

The first teller is Malory, a wandering inconsistent man who loves to stand aside and see what people make of this dark business, life. Seated on a hillside in Italy, he relates to a half acquaintance, half friend, a strange experience he had while living in a farmer's household in Kent. His first vision of the Penniston family as he stands on the threshold watching them at meat, is beautifully conveyed; one shares his 'thrill of excitement' and his consciousness that there was something strange here — something that wasn't at all in keeping with sober English farm folk. Little by little he discovers what it is. That tiny aged great-grandmother, crouched over the fire, roasting chestnuts, wrapping herself in the warmth and the faint foreign smell of the burnt nuts was a Spanish dancer.

The wild warm blood glows again in her great-granddaughter, Ruth, and in Ruth's cousin, Rawdon Westimcott. In Rawdon it runs pure and dark, but there is that in Ruth which rebels; she appeals to Malory to save her — and feeling that Malory is her saviour she loves him, but he is blind until it is too late.

Thus Malory. And now the story is taken up by the man who listened. More than a year has passed; the war is raging. He is in England, discharged from hospital, and he decides to visit the Pennistons and see for himself what has happened. He goes, and realising the deep misery of Ruth in the clutches of her brutal husband, he longs for Westimcott's death and that Ruth should

marry Malory. But there is a spoiled tragedy. Rawdon is not killed when his wife shoots him. He masters her again.

The third part of the book is a journal sent by Malory to his friend, giving an account of the next ten years; how he returned from the war and asked Ruth to leave her husband, how when she refused he went on an expedition to North Africa and then to Ephesus. At Ephesus an entirely new character appears, a man named MacPherson, who has nothing whatever to do with the story, and, except that he receives a yearly packet of flower seeds from Ruth, Malory's story becomes the story of his life with MacPherson. After the outsider's death Malory returns to London where Ruth finds him and — takes him home. She explains (or rather he explains for her) that her wild husband has turned coward and left her. He, the bully, has been through all those ten years gradually filling with fear of her, until, at last, he can bear no more.

What has she done to provoke that fear? Ah, that would be interesting to know, but the author does not tell us. It happened and it freed her; and with his going from her the devil goes from her, too, leaving her at peace and free to lead her other life with Malory.

These are bare outlines, richly filled in by the author, and yet we are not 'carried away.' She has another comment:

> Little of any moment occurs in my story, yet behind it all I am aware of tremendous forces at work which none have rightly understood, neither the actors nor the onlookers.

That is easily said. We have heard it so often of late that we are grown a little suspicious, and almost believe that these are dangerous words for a writer to use. They are a dark shield in his hand when he ought to carry a bright weapon.

(*May 30, 1919.*)

AN EXOTICIST

Blind Alley . . . . . By W. L. George

There is a certain large shop in London where one may still enter in and worship at one's will. The aisles are lofty; the lights dim; each little side chapel is a rich mysterious jewel. Here one may linger, stroking the languid velvet; staring at the embroideries that seem to come to ever richer, more intricate flowering the longer one looks; sighing over chiffons, soft as the shadows on sea water; gazing at the fruit-like cushions gathered from some giant's orchard, and fainting by the way at last upon couches made to pillow the golden heads of millionaires. . . . The sound of the clocks is so sweet, one fancies from their chiming honey is distilled; walking among the huge solemn furniture one expects the air to be shaken by the roaring of a lion; the glass and the china still glitter as though fresh from a reluctant wave.

But it is very strange in the midst of all this to observe the character of one's fellow-worshippers. They are, without exception, solid upper-middle-class English people, well nourished, easy in their behaviour, and indifferent, seeming to ignore, indeed, their fabulous surroundings. They are used to this kind of thing, born and bred in it. Why exclaim? Why give it one's attention?

If we may judge from the latest novel of Mr. W. L. George the whole of England is glassed over, roofed over, subdivided, as he sees it, into just such another *magasin de luxe,* through which he tiptoes, touching, tasting, positively gloating over not only the merchandise, but, with his eyes still a little dazzled by the Eastern glare, the upper-middle-class English people wandering through. It is the ensemble which fascinates him; this coolness and heat which he mixes together into a brew which is, to say the least, uncommonly exotic. For, if we are to believe ' Blind Alley,' the intactness of the upper-middle-class is all a superficial seeming; they are each and all of them capable of taking up a length of that

filmy silk, binding it about their brows in turbans, or shrouding themselves in its veils and going out into the Tottenham Court Road to ride away upon camels. Picture a father, a retired banker, and now a country gentleman, an eminently practical man, hushing a quarrel with a rebellious daughter in this fashion:

> Then Sylvia flung down the pen and stamped: 'You're all against me. You all want to kick me when I'm down. I hate you — I hate you.'
>
> 'So do I,' shouted Sir Hugh, and slammed the door behind him.
>
> A few minutes later . . . he felt remorseful. So he sent by a messenger boy an enormous bunch of Parma violets and a note: 'Sylvia dear, your father has the pride of age and the temper of youth. He asks pardon of his beautiful daughter, and hopes that, when next she comes to cheer his waning years, she will bring forgiveness in her eyes of amber.'

Does that touch and start quivering, in many an English daughter's bosom, a familiar chord?

And here is a young husband, the owner of an aircraft works, musing in the garden of his country home, with his wife and lovely screaming children near by:

> 'There is the truth of life,' he thought. 'To enjoy all that is easily graceful. The sight of lovely women, yet not the stress of loving them; pictures and books, yet not the agony of trying to achieve art; little children that come up as flowers, to get older, to get fat, to get bald, and still to know how to smile.'

It is hard to see his gentleman without a fan and a sash and a little short dagger. And yet but a moment before, thinking over his loves, he had 'sneered at himself' . . . 'Frank, old fellow, you've pitched on a rotten hobby. Why don't you go in for gardening?' Which is as difficult to reconcile with his Oriental self as

the political father's joke with his other daughter who asked him why the spring, my dear, was no longer spring. Sir Hugh laughed. 'Ah yes, those were the days of spring onions; these are the days of spring offensives.'

Perhaps from these extracts the reader may gather that, whatever else Mr. George's long strong book may be, it is not dull. It opens on January 9, 1916, and it closes with the January of this year. It is, therefore, yet another revue of England in war-time, but produced by an expert and conscientious manager who is determined that no scene, situation, character, phrase, catchword or fashion shall be left without a rôle and a name in the packed souvenir programme. The chief parts are sustained by Sir Hugh Oakley, his wife and three grown-up children, each one, as it were, a specimen of his or her kind, and all of them, grouped together, forming what Mr. George doubtless considers 'the representative English family.' The dominating member is Sir Hugh, with his 'high, bony, beak-like nose which had been set as a brand upon the face of nearly every male Oakley' [discriminating Providence!] 'for the last two centuries.' Next in importance comes Monica, a slim unawakened girl whose experiences in a T.N.T. factory are, we gravely hope, more explosive than was usual. She and the manager of the works are the lovers of the piece. 'Most exquisite, most adorable, copper-crowned lily . . . this is the key of the place they call Bull's Field.' When she let herself in she noticed 'a small shanty on wheels, on the walls of which was painted: Foreman's Office. . . . The window opened and Cottenham looked out at her. He did not smile nor sign to her to come, but so remained. . . .' Cottenham indeed? Does one not expect rather at such a time and place — Mr. Wilkie Bard?

Monica's sister, Sylvia, is the woman floating on the dark swollen flood from the embrace of one man into the arms of another and another. Then there is Stephen, the wounded son, whose nose repeats his father's, and whose arguments repeat his

nose, being singularly high, bony and beak-like. And lastly the mother, a very handsome woman with thick dark-red hair and 'sherry-bright' eyes who is impelled to decisive assertions. . . .

They are to be found living through this tremendous interval in the Country House Department, which is incredibly complete, down to a butler carving the joint at the 'tortured marble-topped Louis XV. table,' and the old, all-too-old collie dozing in front of the logs in the hall. The completeness, however, is but symptomatic of Mr. George's method. It persists in scenes from country life, scenes in a bar parlour, before a military tribunal, at a flag day in the Berkeley Hotel. These are all 'models' of their kind, with not a detail missing and only unfamiliar because of that curious strong scent from the Oriental Department, permeating everything.

The prologue and the epilogue are sung by an orange-coloured Persian cat with eyes of watered agate — Kallikrates his name. He enters, on the alert, suspicious, but finding himself alone in the hall with the human beings safely away behind closed doors, he subsides, folds the 'velvet gauntlets of his paws,' composes his squat head into the sumptuous silk of his ruff, and begins to purr. . . . If we may say so without disrespect, we can almost hear the author joining in.

(*June 6, 1919.*)

A SHORT STORY

Kew Gardens . . . . . By Virginia Woolf

If it were not a matter to sigh over, it would be almost amusing to remember how short a time has passed since Samuel Butler advised the budding author to keep a note-book. What would be the author's reply to such a counsel nowadays but an amused smile: 'I keep nothing else!' True; but if we remember rightly,

Samuel Butler goes a little further; he suggests that the note-book should be kept in the pocket, and that is what the budding author finds intolerably hard. Up till now he has been so busy growing and blowing that his masterpieces still are unwritten, but there are the public waiting, gaping. Hasn't he anything to offer before they wander elsewhere? Can't he startle their attention by sheer roughness and crudeness and general slapdashery? Out comes the note-book, and the deed is done. And since they find its contents absolutely thrilling and satisfying, is it to be wondered at that the risk of producing anything bigger, more solid, and more positive — is not taken? The note-books of young writers are their laurels; they prefer to rest on them. It is here that one begins to sigh, for it is here that the young author begins to swell and to demand that, since he has chosen to make his note-books his All, they shall be regarded as of the first importance, read with a deadly seriousness and acclaimed as a kind of new Art — the art of not taking pains, of never wondering why it was one fell in love with this or that, but contenting oneself with the public's dreary interest in promiscuity.

Perhaps that is why one feels that Mrs. Virginia Woolf's story belongs to another age. It is so far removed from the note-book literature of our day, so exquisite an example of love at second sight. She begins where the others leave off, entering Kew Gardens, as it were, alone and at her leisure when their little first screams of excitement have died away and they have rushed afield to some new brilliant joy. It is strange how conscious one is, from the first paragraph, of this sense of leisure: her story is bathed in it as if it were a light, still and lovely, heightening the importance of everything, and filling all that is within her vision with that vivid, disturbing beauty that haunts the air the last moment before sunset or the first moment after dawn. Poise — yes, poise. Anything may happen; her world is on tiptoe.

This is her theme. In Kew Gardens there was a flower-bed

full of red and blue and yellow flowers. Through the hot July afternoon men and women ' straggled past the flower-bed with a curiously irregular movement not unlike that of the white and blue butterflies who crossed the turf in zig-zag flights from bed to bed,' paused for a moment, were ' caught ' in its dazzling net, and then moved on again and were lost. The mysterious intricate life of the flower-bed goes on untouched by these odd creatures. A little wind moves, stirring the petals so that their colours shake on to the brown earth, grey of a pebble, shell of a snail, a raindrop, a leaf, and for a moment the secret life is half-revealed; then a wind blows again, and the colours flash in the air and there are only leaves and flowers. . . .

It happens so often — or so seldom — in life, as we move among the trees, up and down the known and unknown paths, across the lawns and into the shade and out again, that something — for no reason that we can discover — gives us pause. Why is it that, thinking back upon that July afternoon, we see so distinctly that flower-bed? We must have passed myriads of flowers that day; why do these particular ones return? It is true, we stopped in front of them, and talked a little and then moved on. But, though we weren't conscious of it at the time, something was happening — something. . . .

But it would seem that the author, with her wise smile, is as indifferent as the flowers to these odd creatures and their ways. The tiny rich minute life of a snail — how she describes it! the angular high-stepping green insect — how passionate is her concern for him! Fascinated and credulous, we believe these things are all her concern until suddenly with a gesture she shows us the flower-bed, growing, expanding in the heat and light, filling a whole world.

(*June 13, 1919.*)

GLANCING LIGHT

Java Head . . . . . By Joseph Hergesheimer

Those who have spent any portion of their life in a seaport town will remember a peculiar quality of light, which is to be observed there and in no other surroundings. For when the sun is over the sea and the waves high a trembling brilliance flashes over the town, now illuminating this part, now that. In its erratic hovering behaviour it might be likened to that imp of light children love to call Jack-on-the-wall; one can never tell where it may next appear. It is, and something is caught in it, dazzling fine, and then it is gone to be back again for another glittering moment — but almost before one has time to look it is flown away. Brilliant light, but not deep light, not a steady shining — a light by which one can register the moment but not discover and explore it.

For the writing of his novel, ' Java Head,' Mr. Joseph Hergesheimer would seem to have pointed his compass to this unfixed star and the result is an exciting but not a satisfying book. The scene, the personages and the drama — they are all separate, one from another, and as one story unfolds itself we have the sense that while the author applies himself to one he forgets the other two. They are dropped from him and from us until he chooses to revive them, to bring them into the light again.

The scene is Salem, at the time when it was still rich with incoming and outgoing trade, with ships bound for the East Indies and China and returning laden with fabulous cargoes. But for all the author's inside information and professional way in handling a ship, we are never quite sure that the sea is real sea or that these curious perfumed chests and jars are really full. While we read we are fascinated, but our fascination is conscious and almost assumed, as at a spectacle — something arranged and specially ' set ' for a performance.

The personages are old Jeremy Ammidon, head of the firm

of Ammidon, Ammidon and Saltanstone, his son William, William's wife and their family of half-grown daughters. There is another son Gerrit, captain of the 'Nautilus' and hero of the book, whose ship is long overdue, and the early chapters full of the growing anxiety of the household at Java Head for his return are, to our thinking, the most successful. Here, at least, it is hardly possible to avoid a sense of progression, and the members of the family, gathered together under the shadowy wing of disaster are more nearly seen in relation to one another. Obvious as it is, and again more than a little theatrical, it is enough to lead us on in the hope that when the moment of relief comes and the ship is sighted, the scene, the personages and the drama will — not lose their separateness — but become part of one springing arch of light, their colours banded together as in a rainbow. This does not happen. For though Gerrit is seen on the deck, on the wharf, greeting his family, he never comes home at all. It is a wooden sailor who leads his high-born Manchu wife through the doors of Java Head, and however greatly Mr. Hergesheimer may insist upon Gerrit's heroic qualities wooden he remains. We are told that he loved the Manchu lady. She was pining away, like some fabulous exquisite bird in a cage in Shanghai until he rescued her and brought her into a bigger cage, with heavier bolts and clumsier bars, and stupid unpainted faces to stare through and wonder at her. Her appearance, her clothes, her appointments, they are game indeed for the greedy light to play with, but, absorbed in them, it penetrates no further than to give us just a glimpse of her superhuman calm, of the tragedy it was for her that this calm should be broken by Edward Dunsack, a low wretch whose mind has been poisoned by opium and who realises in his fiendish dreaming way how she suffers.

By the bedside of Dunsack's niece, whom Gerrit has always loved, she commits suicide, and on the light flickers and dances, over another love affair, over the town, on to the niece, on to

Gerrit's ship waiting for him in the harbour, until finally it shows us Gerrit married to his old love and again putting out to sea.

It is not enough to be comforted with colours, to finger bright shawls, to watch the fireworks, to wonder what those strange men are shouting down at the wharves and to wander with the Ammidon family through the rooms of Java House. We are excited; our curiosity is roused as to what lies beneath these strange rich surfaces. Mr. Hergesheimer leaves us wondering and unsatisfied.

(*June 13, 1919.*)

THE NEW INFANCY

Mary Olivier: A Life . . . . . By May Sinclair

There has been discovered, of late, cropping up among our established trees and flowers a remarkable plant, which, while immensely engaging our attention, has not hitherto attained a size and blooming sufficient to satisfy our desire to comprehend it. Little tight buds, half-open flowers that open no further, a blossom or two more or less out — these the plant has yielded. But here at last, with 'Mary Olivier' Miss Sinclair has given into our grateful hands a full fine specimen.

Is this, we wonder, turning over its three hundred and sixty-eight pages, to be the novel of the future? And if so, whence has it sprung? Who are its ancestors, its parents, its relations, its distant connections even? But the longer we consider it the more it appears to us as a very orphan of orphans, lying in a basket on the threshold of literature with a note pinned on its chest saying: 'If I am to be taken in and welcomed, then the whole rest of the family must be thrown out of the window.' That they cannot exist together seems to us very plain. For the difference between the new way of writing and the old way is not a difference of degree but of kind. Its aim, as we understand it, is to represent

things and persons as separate, as distinct, as apart as possible. Here, if you like, are the animals set up on the floor, the dove so different from the camel, the sheep so much bigger than the tiger. But where is the Ark? And where, even at the back of the mind, is the Flood, that dark mass of tumbling water which must sooner or later receive them, and float them or drown them? The Ark and the Flood belong to the old order, they are gone. In their place we have the author asking with indefatigable curiosity: 'What is the effect of this animal upon me, or this or the other one?'

But if the Flood, the sky, the rainbow, or what Blake beautifully calls the bounding outline, be removed and if, further, no one thing is to be related to another thing, we do not see what is to prevent the whole of mankind turning author. Why should writers exist any longer as a class apart if their task ends with a minute description of a big or a little thing? If this is the be-all and end-all of literature why should not every man, woman and child write an autobiography and so provide reading matter for the ages? It is not difficult. There is no gulf to be bridged, no risk to be taken. If you do not throw your Papa and your Mamma against the heavens before beginning to write about them, his whiskers and her funny little nose will be quite important enough to write about, quite enough, reinforced with the pattern of the drawing-room carpet, the valse of the moment and the cook upstairs taking her hair out of pins, to make a whole great book. And as B's papa's whiskers and B's mamma's funny little nose are bound to be different again, and their effect upon B again different — why here is high entertainment forever!

Entertainment. But the great writers of the past have not been 'entertainers.' They have been seekers, explorers, thinkers. It has been their aim to reveal a little of the mystery of life. Can one think for one moment of the mystery of life when one is at the mercy of surface impressions? Can one *think* when one is not only

taking part but being snatched at, pulled about, flung here and there, cuffed and kissed, and played with? Is it not the great abiding satisfaction of a work of art that the writer was master of the situation when he wrote it and at the mercy of nothing less mysterious than a greater work of art?

It is too late in the day for this new form, and Miss Sinclair's skilful handling of it serves but to make its failure the more apparent. She has divided her history of Mary Olivier into five periods, infancy, childhood, adolescence, maturity and middle-age, but these divisions are negligible. In the beginning Mary is two, but at the end she is still two — and forty-seven — and so it is throughout. At any moment, whatever her real age may be she is two — or forty-seven — either, both. At two (poor infant stag-gerer!) the vast barn of impressions opens upon her and life, with a pitchfork, tosses her out Mamma, Papa, Mark, Roddy, Dan, Jenny, Catty, Aunt Charlotte, Uncle Victor, and all the rest of them. At forty-seven, although in the meantime many of them have died and died disgustingly, she is still turning them over and over, still wondering whether any of them did happen to have in one of their ignoble pockets the happiness she has missed in life. . . . For on page 355 she confesses, to our surprise, that is what she has been wanting all along — happiness. Wanting, perhaps, not seeking, not even longing for, but wanting as a child of two might want its doll or its donkey, running into the room where Papa on his dying bed is being given an emetic, to see if it is on the counterpane, running out to see if it is in the cab that has come to take Aunt Charlotte to the Lunatic Asylum, and then forgetting all about it to stare at ' Blanc-mange going round the table, quivering and shaking and squelching under the spoon.'

(*June 20, 1919.*)

FLOURISHETH IN STRANGE PLACES

Love Lane . . . . . By J. C. Snaith

The coloured wrapper to 'Love Lane' depicts an elderly fat man in a yellow suit and a swollen white waistcoat. His felt hat is to one side, he wears white spats, a large bow-tie, and in the corner of his mouth, at an angle, flourishes a cigar. Thumbs in his armholes, away he swaggers from pretty Miss, who stands, blue-eyed, pale and golden-crowned, one lily hand raised, one lily hand clenched, looking after him with eyes of longing. And above them the title of the book, well-spaced and bold, hangs for a signboard.

Which of us, except in those last dread three minutes before the bookstall, when a man feels his mind dissolve as a wisp of smoke under the station roof and is as a little child in the hands of the braggart youth with a pencil behind his ear, would dream of inquiring any further? Which of us would not decide at a glance that 'Love Lane' was one of those half-sentimental, half-humorous mixtures — the refreshing non-alcoholic summer novel *enfin,* and pass it by? A superficial examination of the plot would not tend to alter that opinion. Here is the self-made vulgar old man, half hero, half bully, who aspires to be mayor of Blackhampton, and his timid wife, weeping for the old simple times. They have three daughters: one a successfully married snob; the second, a poor creature who has quarrelled with her parents, having married beneath her; and Sally, the baby, struck out of the old man's will for joining the suffragettes and getting six weeks' hard. The husband of the second girl is that familiar figure in our recent fiction — a pathetic tradesman — a little self-effacing greengrocer, a failure. He can't get hold of business, somehow, but he can grow a rose to beat any man, and the sunset reminds him of the 'Inferno by Dant with Lustrations by Door.'

One can hardly imagine characters less promising, less original. Nevertheless they are the material that the artist has chosen and his success is the final justification of his choice. At the beginning we are shown these people, their interests and their lives, as all separate, scattered, and uncontrolled. They are puffed up or cast down, greedy, self-centred and vain — all except Amelia's husband, who is merely a shadow of a man with a vague suspicion that things might be different, and therefore a vague grudge against things as they are.

Then, quite suddenly, we are conscious of an immense, inconceivable ring of fire closing in upon them; they are bathed in one terrible light, and William Hollis marches off towards it — out of his little misery in the shop in Love Lane into the anguish of his first experience.

In our youth we were taught that pain was not only a kind of necessary gymnastic exercise set us by the Lord — an immensely heavy dumb-bell to be lifted in His sight as a proof of what we could still stagger but not fall under — we were assured that we could not possibly appreciate the value of anything unless it had been first all but taken from us. Nowadays we are inclined to believe that it is neither pain nor happiness that heightens the value of life; it is rather the sense of danger, common to them both — danger which strips us of our false acquired security and demands of us that we shall take the risk.

William Hollis, before the war, had no particular desire to live, and the agonizing misery of life in the trenches — incredible as it might seem to our aged pastors and masters — did not awaken any new desire in him. But the feeling that any moment might be his last unlocked his lips. He made a friend, a man who came from his part of the country, an artist, who understood his fumbling speech, said for him what he wanted to say — taught him to see clearly what he vaguely glimpsed. The artist died, but William Hollis went on living not only his new free life, but the

life of his dead friend as well. He came home, and a wonderful late-flowering love blossomed for him and his wife. Then he was seriously wounded and the chance offered for him to leave the army and settle down with his woman. But he would not take it. For some unaccountable reason that she never understood, he decided to go back and die among the men with whom he had learned to live. What he had learned out there had been so marvellous to him, it had given such value to life, that he could not, without betraying himself, submit to anything less wonderful.

While this great miracle has been happening to William Hollis lesser changes, but changes no less wonderful, have happened to the others. They, too, have become human beings, but human beings ennobled.

But they are all grouped round the central figure, and upon him the author has brought all his power of understanding to bear. He has created an extraordinarily poignant character.

(*June 27, 1919.*)

UNCOMFORTABLE WORDS

The Bonfire . . . . . By Anthony Brendon

If a child alone on a desert island were to be visited suddenly by two presences — one, a divine, angelic winged creature with comfortable hands and eyes that shone with love and mercy, the other a hideous, scaly fiend, with a hissing tail, immense claws, and jets of flame for eyes — we imagine that the child's first feeling would not be one of wonder and delight at the angel; it would be terror, uncontrollable terror, at the sight of the fiend. He would not even be certain that the angel could save him. The angel would have no meaning, no significance, for him except as a possible safeguard from the fiend. Even if the angel were to bear him away and set him down under a garden tree and play him a soft

air upon a little harp, we do not believe that the child would ever recover from that monstrous vision. Terror might keep him from wandering far, might lend him a false look of listening to the harp, might cause him to join in the singing in the hope of keeping the fiend away, but one glimpse of the hissing tail again, and the doctrine of Divine Love would be nothing but a possible means of escape.

In a 'coda' to his book of short stories dealing with life at a Jesuit school, Mr. Brendon, while acclaiming the supreme excellence of the Jesuit education in that it teaches the doctrine of Divine Love, deplores the teaching of hell-fire to children. But, if we are to believe his account, were the flames to be removed, there would be left nothing but a cold fireplace. It is the devils who keep the schoolhouse in a glow, and not the angels. It is the sinfulness of those little boys, or their potential sinfulness, which is almost the whole concern of their masters. Lessons are only 'of secondary consideration,' play is a means of keeping out of mischief; during the day the boys are never out of sight of a warder, at night the dormitories are patrolled by a figure in felt slippers carrying a lantern. This 'watching' the author defends on the ground that 'it did maintain a standard of bodily purity. The boys left school unsullied: was the price too high to pay?'

We find this idea of the persistent viciousness of normal healthy children very hard to swallow. But, if we have read Mr. Brendon aright, the Jesuits do not believe there is such a person as a normal healthy boy; there is the coarse, cunning and dirty-minded boy, and the too soft, too gentle, almost idiotic boy. Both of them are defective; both stand an equally good chance of going to hell, an equally poor one of getting to heaven; and since the human soul is far more easily ensnared by terror than by love, shake the devil at them five times for every once that you show them the angel. It is a sorry view of childhood. The argument apart, these

stories are written with an admirable simplicity of style. But whether the author is ironic or naïve is an intriguing little problem for the reader to solve.

(*July 4, 1919.*)

THE GREAT SIMPLICITY

The Four Horsemen By Vincente Blasco Ibañez

There is no need for the three loud solemn blasts of American criticism which herald this translation of 'Los Cuatro Jinetes del Apocalipsis'; for although the fine edges are blurred and the whole is misted over by the heavy fingers of Charlotte Brewster Jordan, it is recognizable almost immediately as a powerful and distinguished novel. We say almost, for the first chapter, skilful and not extraordinary, in no wise prepares us for the magnificent second chapter, giving a description of the life of an aged Argentine landowner and chief, his family, dependents and possessions. Madariaga the Centaur is the author's name for the foolish, wise old millionaire; it could not be more apt. As we read we are haunted by a vision of troops of horses, streaming away and away over limitless prairies, being rounded up, stamping and quivering and tossing their brilliant heads and then off again in a bounding line against the far horizon, until all that happens seems to become a part of this rich free life and rhythm.

To the old man there comes a young Frenchman, Desnoyers, seeking employment; the master takes a fancy to him. 'He's a regular pearl, this Frenchy. . . . I like him because he is very serious. That is the way I like a man.' Desnoyers becomes part of the family and marries the elder daughter, Chica; the younger, La Romantica, runs away with another of the employees, a timid, weak creature who has been forced to leave Germany under a cloud. Madariaga detests Von Hartrott and detests his children

> . . . with hair like a shredded carrot and the two oldest wearing specs. . . . They don't seem like folks wearing those glasses; they look like sharks. Madariaga had never seen any sharks, but he imagined them, without knowing why, with round glassy eyes like the bottoms of bottles.

But he gave the whole of his savage old heart to Desnoyers' children, Julio and Chichi, teaching them, before they were eight years old, to ride, to eat beefsteaks for breakfast and to lasso wild horses.

When he died he left an enormous fortune to each of the two families, and the Von Hartrotts went off to Berlin to live in splendour, while the Desnoyers, not to be outdone, set up their home in Paris. By this time Desnoyers himself is old, and Julio and Chichi shorn of their wildness are exquisite, extravagant young persons, as Parisian as it is possible to be. Only the fat, comfortable Chica is the same.

When the war breaks upon them, Julio is an artist, a celebrated tango dancer and the lover of a famous society woman; Chichi the butterfly, is engaged to a senator's son, and the father is become almost a maniac for buying rich furniture, motor-cars — all kinds of fantastic possessions for his splendid apartment in Paris and his castle at Villefranche-sur-Marne. They, with the rest of the world are lifted upon the huge ugly wave and shaken and tumbled, and strangely, at this moment, the mantle of Madariaga seems to descend upon old Desnoyers; he becomes, in the sober sense of the words, a great character. Full of fear for his treasures at the castle, and especially for an immense gold bath, the purchase of which he considered the culminating achievement of his wealth, he rushes off to the rescue — too late. The Germans are there, and the strange old man has to stand by, staring stupidly while they break up and plunder his toy, and kill the innocent villagers.

It is a dreadful fact that since it has been our misfortune to read so much and so much of the horror of war we have become almost indifferent to it. We accept — we nod at a repetition — ' There it is; there's the old tune played again ' — but how moved are we? But when we are confronted by the figure of old Desnoyers, not taking part in it, just looking on, powerless and helpless, at the great laying-waste of life, the familiar tune becomes again an unbearable agony to hear.

Señor Ibañez does not believe in purifying fire; or that out of evil good will come; or that God works in a mysterious way His wonders to perform; he believes that war is Hell. Neither can there be any line drawn so that here we are at war and here we are not at war. When old Desnoyers returns to Paris all is just as terrible as it was at Villefranche-sur-Marne, and the fact that because of it Julio turns soldier and goes off to fight for his father's country and Chichi learns the anguish of love is not the result of a divine accident but of a diabolical one. The young men die in battle, but the women and the old men die just as surely in the battle against unseen, untiring enemies who can never be driven back.

Just as Madariaga in his old age gave his heart to Julio, the little wild fearless boy, so does Desnoyers live for his soldier son. Everything is changing, scattering, quaking, he feels that at any moment the earth may be swallowed up, yet he has this instinctive faith, very absurd, very firm that . . . ' No one will kill him. My heart, which never deceives me, tells me so. . . . None will kill him.' How many fathers in these hideous years have echoed these words? Chica, the anxious sorrowing mother, has her consolations; she can talk, she can go to church, weep, send Julio comforts, but the father's worn-out old heart beats only to ' my son, my son.' And Julio is killed.

The last chapter describes a visit by the Desnoyers family to the battlefield where Julio is buried:

Tombs . . . tombs on all sides! The white locusts of death were swarming over the entire countryside. There was no corner free from their quivering wings. The recently ploughed earth, the yellowing roads, the dark woodland, everything was pulsating in unresting undulation. The soil seemed to be clamouring, and its words were the vibrations of the restless little flags. . . .

The father was staring at the rustic grave in dumb amazement. His son was there, there forever! . . . and he would never see him again! He imagined him sleeping unshrouded below, in direct contact with the earth, just as Death had surprised him in his miserable and heroic old uniform.

All was ended.

'The Four Horsemen' is not a subtle novel; the characters are simple, their emotions are simple and direct. But however complicated our acquired existence may be, we are, when the last clever word has been spoken, simple creatures. Living in this dishonourable age, it is a strange, great relief to us to have that simplicity recognized so nobly by Señor Ibañez.

(*July 11, 1919.*)

A NOVEL OF SUSPENSE

The Escape of Sir William Heans By William Hay

It is strange how content most writers are to ignore the influence of the weather upon the feelings and the emotions of their characters, or, if they do not ignore it, to treat it, except in its most obvious manifestations — 'she felt happy because the sun was shining' — 'the dull day served but to heighten his depression' — as something of very little importance, something quite separate and apart. But by 'the weather' we do not mean a kind

of ocean at our feet, with broad effects of light and shadow, into which we can plunge or not plunge, at will; we mean an external atmosphere which is in harmony or discordant with a state of soul; poet's weather, perhaps we might call it. But why not prose-writer's weather, too? Why indeed! Are not your poet and your writer of prose faced with exactly the same problem? Can we of this age go on being content with stories and sketches and impressions and novels which are less than adventures of the soul? It is all so wearying, so wearying — this vision of the happy or unhappy pair or company, driving through the exhibition, meeting with adventures on the way and so safe home, or not safe home, at last. How can anything not trivial happen while the author still thinks it necessary to drive them at such a pace? Why will he not see that we would rather — far rather — they stayed at home, mysteriously themselves, with time to be conscious, in the deepest, richest sense, of what is happening to them. . . . Then, indeed, as in the stories of Tchehov, we should become aware of the rain pattering on the roof all night long, of the languid, feverish wind, of the moonlit orchard and the first snow, passionately realized, not indeed as analogous to a state of mind, but as linking that mind to the larger whole.

In 'The Escape of Sir William Heans' Mr. Hay has made the most of a curious and unusual opportunity to exploit this method. The scene of his story is Hobart, Tasmania; the time, between 1830 and 1840, when that place was a 'thriving' convict settlement; and the plot — how Sir William Heans, an English gentleman, transported for a crime against society, finds his captivity insupportable and makes three attempts at escape, of which the third is successful. But this simple plot is only the stem pushing up painfully into the forbidden light; from it there grow many dark, intricate branches and ashy fruits; the half-blind little girl, Abelia, clings to it, smothering and pale, like a clematis, and always

wandering near there is the old native woman Conapanny, with her hidden bracelet of black hair.

Nevertheless, the figure of Sir William is always the outstanding one, and the author is so faithful to his state of mind that there are moments when he feels that all else that happens is a dream, dreamed by the prisoner as he sat staring at an opaque glass window, seven by three, and crossed with iron bars. For that which is peculiar to the book is the persistent and dreadful sense of imprisonment. Hobart itself, locked in its pretty harbour and hemmed in on either side by huge tangled forests, is the first of a series of 'boxes,' each one a little smaller, a little narrower and tighter than the one that went before. Even the small official society with its convict servants, its precautions against escaped prisoners and its continual gossip about prison affairs is not 'free'; an innocent gathering becomes a plot, with its victim, its watcher and its spy; they arrange a dance, and in the middle of the dancing a shot is heard, and a whisper goes round that someone has been killed upstairs — nobody knows who. . . .

But the abiding impression is the horrible light in which poor Sir William sees this crude new town, half full of corrupt, filthy men, with its prisons and gaolers, and police patrols and natural defences of giant bush. All is bathed in the unendurable half-light and flicker that comes before a storm: great puffs of wind blow through the book, the sea arises, tossing and shaking — and the storm never breaks. Those who have lived in the Antipodes know such days — days of waiting for the storm to break, of getting up to another day of wind, of watching the strange divided pallor and darkness, of tearing voices, nervous, agitated, shouting against the wind. One feels that at any moment anything may happen — and nothing happens. Until at last when the storm does come its violence is almost a relief — a calm.

So, when Sir William finally escapes, his ordeal and his sufferings in the bush seem quite simple and endurable. We almost

lose sight of him before he reaches the Bay, where the little broken-down ship sails in at last to rescue him. The suspense is over, and with it, in a way, everything is over.

It was a moment therefore of intense relief when the ship jibbed about and moved imperceptibly away on the south-eastern tack. Slowly the sound of the waterfall softened, and slowly the great walls dimmed over the silent pool, and slowly they shrank under the wings and pinnacles of the forests, while these with their thousand shouldering sentinels slowly — very slowly — softened in the smoke of morning.

(*July 18, 1919.*)

ANODYNE

Crabtree House . . . . . By Howel Evans

What is a 'sweetly pretty' novel? Standing in the library waiting for the book which never is in, we are constantly hearing this term of recommendation used by a certain type of young lady. 'Oh, do read "Room for Two." Of course "The Fireplace" is interesting and awfully thrilling and exciting, but it is not sweetly pretty.' And the sweetly pretty book wins the day.

We imagine it is a novel which sets out to prove that the only form of government is government by the heart alone, and for the heart alone. There is a dreadful black monster, a kind of wild bull, looking over the fence at the innocent undefended picnic and plotting and planning how he may come in and upset and trample all — it is in the mind. Beware of it. Have nothing to do with it. Shun it as you would your mortal enemy. The innocent, the simple, the loyal, the trusty, the faithful, the uncomplaining — all, all are children of the heart. Have they ever plotted and planned, ever lain tossing through the dark hours — and

thinking; ever smiled strangely and disappeared; ever slunk down narrow streets muttering something and frowning? Never! These are the habits of villains, of schemers, adventurers and clever men — these are the signs by which ye may know the children of the mind. If the mind triumphs — where is your happy ending? And as we understand the sweetly pretty novel it is part of its 'appeal' that you are never out of sight of the happy ending from the very first page. Your faith is tried, but not unduly tried; the boat may rock a little and a dash or two of spray come over, but you are never out of harbour — never so much as turned towards the open sea.

Poor little human beings! from the success of the sweetly pretty novel one may learn how difficult it is for them to keep their faith intact in the triumph of good over evil. What consolation to turn from the everyday world with its obscure processes and its happy endings so remarkably well hidden to another existence where every other moment they may have the comfort of crying: 'There now! I knew that was going to happen!'

What the outside reader does feel inclined to question is whether the simple people need to be so incredibly simple and the innocent characters innocent to imbecility.

The heroine of 'Crabtree House,' for instance, at the age of nineteen when about to tell her father that her young man wishes to marry her, goes to these lengths:

> '. . . and Dad — ' Rosie came up and fingered her father's collar, and put his tie straight and whispered a little shyly: 'he — he — he's been asking me when — when it's to be. You know what I mean, Dad, don't you? And I said, well, that — he — I — he — we must ask you, Dad. Don't you see? '

That is hard enough to bear. But when Rose delivers herself later of:

'But there, I won't speak any more of that, Daddy. . . . I know it only makes you sad, and Daddie — may I — may I, to-night, like I used to when I was a little girl, and you used to call me Goldilocks, may I say my prayers on your knees?'

Amos could only smooth that silken hair once more; he could not trust himself to answer; and Rosie knelt at her father's knees and with eyes shut and hands folded prayed in silence. . . .

we seem to hear the 'Broken Melody' as we read and the waves beating against the Eastbourne Pier. Let us be grateful to Mr. Howel Evans that we are not with Rosie and her husband in the early months of their wedded life when Rosie is caught hemming an infinitesimal garment. . . .

But apart from this embarrassing exaggeration of the characters' heavenly qualities 'Crabtree House' is as nice an example of the sweetly pretty novel as you might wish to find. Heart and mind are nicely balanced against each other, and though you would not doubt the issue of the fight, you cannot be absolutely certain how the victory will be obtained, and so — you read on.

(*July 25, 1919.*)

'A POSER'

The Land They Loved . . . By G. D. Cummins

A woman is standing on the deck of an Atlantic liner, straining to catch the first glimpse of the Irish coast. She is 'nearly five foot eight in height, with handsome features and a stately carriage . . . with this straightness of carriage there was a looseness of limb, a certain deft grace in all her movements, that made her a remarkable figure. . . .' We are told that she has come home because of a craving in her blood for the fields and wide spaces, because she was conscious that any life away from Ireland could

never satisfy her profoundly. Whence exactly came these strange urgings of the spirit she did not know, but they were strong enough to drive her back to her brother's farm. . . . 'The memory of old forgotten times came drifting back to her from the outlying spaces of her mind as she watched and waited now.' Thinking of the joy of working in the field again, of the warm welcome awaiting her from her brother Denis and Aunt Maggie, Kate Carmody wept tears of joy.

And all happened just as she had expected — if anything, better than she had expected. For the war had brought prosperity to Droumavalla; the seven fat years seemed to be there. On the evening of her return, Kate went for a walk alone, and overcome she 'knelt down and took up a little of the earth, cradling it for a moment in the palms of her hands and then letting it slip slowly through her fingers. Ah! how she loved the land. . . .'

There is one difference. Many of the boys are gone to fight; her two boon companions, Steve and Michael Turpin, both are dead — one in France, one, a Sinn Feiner, killed in the Dublin rebellion. Only one brother, Eugene, is left, and he is lamed from a hurley match. This is a terrible shock to Kate. Dimly she had always thought that one day she would marry Steve or Michael; it is more terrible still for her to find that Eugene is a weak creature, father-ridden, obedient as a dog to his bullying old father for fear that the old man will leave the farm away from him. For, like Kate, Eugene has one passion. It is for the land. Nevertheless, he has the courage to ask Kate to marry him; but although she is tempted to, because of the part of him that is like his darling brothers, his cowardice and weakness shame her. She'll never marry any but 'a whole man.'

So far, Mr. Cummins succeeds in conveying, with astonishing ease and freshness, the charm of that country. As we read we seem to wade into its flowering beauty and warmth until we are lost like children wading in a ripe meadow. Sharply he pulls

us up. No, Kate won't have Eugene; she won't stay in Droumavalla. Off she goes to Dublin, and after a series of gloomy vicissitudes, she takes a position as cook at a salary of eighteen pounds a year, becomes very proud of having a fat policeman in her kitchen, devours servants' novelettes, and on her marketing jaunts is thrilled to the marrow by salmon-pink dinner-blouses in a dingy draper's. Good-bye to the land. Here is the area gate — the butcher's boy and the baker's boy. Here's for high tragedy the fact she can't get all the sugar she wants for her tea.

There is a last act when, finding she does not really love the policeman, she hands him over to the housemaid, and returns to the farm to find Eugene's old father dead, and Eugene a changed man — a whole man, the biggest man in the district, and still wishful to marry her.

> Kate found it difficult to realize she had got back to the old life, and that her future would be lived with the man who walked beside her, this man who was so beautiful, so gentle, and yet so strong.

We find it incredibly difficult to understand why Mr. Cummins ruined so promising a book by ever taking her away from it.

(*August 1, 1919.*)

A BACKWARD GLANCE

The Arrow of Gold . . . . . By Joseph Conrad

As we read Mr. Conrad's latest published book we find ourselves wishing once again that it were a common practice among authors to let us know the year in which a book is begun and ended. This, of course, applies only to writers whose work does show very marked signs of progression, development, and expansion. The others, that large band who will guarantee to produce

the same thrill with variations for you once, twice, or thrice yearly, do not count. For their great aim is never to show a sign of change — to make their next novel as good as their last, but no better — to take their readers for an excursion, as it were, but always to put up at the same hotel, where they know the waiters' faces, and the way to the bathroom, and the shape of the biscuits that accompany the cheese.

But perhaps your real writer would retort that this was precisely the business of the critic — to be able to see, at a glance almost, what place this or that novel filled in the growing chain. Our reply would be that the spirit of the age is against us; it is an uneasy, disintegrating, experimental spirit, and there are moments, as, for instance, the moment after reading the 'Arrow of Gold,' when it shakes us into wishing that Mr. Conrad had just added those four figures, thereby putting out once and for all that tiny flicker of dismay.

But — away with it! It is impossible not to believe that he has had this particular novel in the cellar for a considerable time — this sweet, sparkling, heady mixture in the strange-shaped bottle with the fantastic label. How does it stand being held up to the light, tasted, sipped, and compared with those dark foreign beverages with which he has made us so familiar?

The tale is told by a young man who confesses to being, at the time, 'inconceivably young — still beautifully unthinking — infinitely receptive.' Lonely and sober, at Carnival time in Marseilles he chums up with two remarkable gentlemen; one Captain Blunt, 'eminently elegant,' and the other a robust, fair little man in clothes too tight for him, a Mr. Mills. They are both connected with the plot to put Don Carlos on the throne of Spain — Blunt as a soldier, and Mills as a gun-runner; and the talk between these three comparative strangers is of the ship loaded with contraband which Mills brought from the Clyde, how it was chased by a republican gunboat and stranded, and whether it would be

possible to escape the vigilance of the French Customs authorities and save the cargo for the cause. The French Customs cannot be bribed, but a mere hint from high quarters . . . and here Captain Blunt 'let fall casually the words, "She will manage it for you quite easily."' 'She' is the *femme fatale,* the woman of all times, the Old Enchantress, the idol before whom no man can do aught but worship, the Eternal Feminine, Donna Rita, woman.

During the night the two friends tell their young acquaintance her incredible story, and even arrange that he shall meet her next day at luncheon. This is her incredible story. When scarcely more than a child she was found in a *robe à deux sous* with a hole in her stocking, sitting with her feet in the damp grass, by an eccentric personality, a man of immense wealth and power, a collector of priceless possessions, and a painter. In something less than a year and a half he brought her to Paris, and the first morning he took her riding an old sculptor greeted her and asked if 'I might finish my artist's life with your face; but I shall want a piece of those shoulders too. . . . I can see through the cloth they are divine. . . . Yes, I will do your head and then — *nunc dimittis.*' 'These,' says Captain Blunt, 'are the first words with which the world greeted her, or should I say civilization did. . . .' For four years she holds her court in the pavilion at Passy, treated, as she says, 'as if I had been a precious object in a collection, an ivory carving, or a piece of Chinese embroidery,' and all the great ones of the modern world pass in review before her. Then her protector dies, leaving her his fortune, his collections, his four houses, but not one 'woman soul' to whom she might turn, who would at least 'have put her on her guard.' There is a tragedy out of which she emerged, unspotted but more famous still, and a great, great power. Why is she, too, anxious that Don Carlos should have his crown? We are not told. The new young man, who takes the name of Monsieur George, joins the conspiracy, and lays his life at Donna Rita's feet. From the

moment he sees her coming down the crimson staircase all is over with the young man. He cannot find words big enough, bright enough, strong enough with which to describe that vision — 'the delicate carnation of that face, which, after the first glance given to the whole person, drew irresistibly your gaze to itself by an indefinable quality of charm beyond all analysis, and made you think of remote races, of strange generations, of the faces of women sculptured on immemorial monuments. . . .'

> . . . She said to us, 'I am sorry I kept you waiting.' Her voice was low-pitched, penetrating, and of the most seductive gentleness. . . .
>
> . . . Next moment she caught sight of some envelopes lying on the round marble-topped table. . . . She seized one of them, with a wonderfully quick, almost feline movement.
>
> . . . Her widened eyes stared at the paper. Mr. Blunt threw one of the doors open, but before we passed through we heard a petulant exclamation accompanied by childlike stamping with both feet, and ending in a laugh which had in it a note of contempt.

We have quoted this to show how complete a *femme fatale* Donna Rita was, how absolutely true to type. Where shall we look for a creature more richly equipped with all the allurements and fascinations?

The plot moves on. Blunt flashes his teeth, Mills disappears, Donna Rita's inscrutable maid grows in inscrutability, a group of preposterous creatures move within its circle — they are there — they are gone — Monsieur George succeeds in adventure and almost succeeds in love — until there is a crisis so fantastical that we cannot but fancy Mr. Conrad of to-day smiling at its stage horrors. Out of the murderous clutch of a little man who loved her in her wild childhood and has haunted her ever since, a little man with whiskers 'black and cut somewhat in the shape of a

shark's fin, and so very fine that the least breath of air animated them into a sort of playful restlessness,' Monsieur George bears her away to a villa 'embowered in roses,' and to six months of happy love. But then Monsieur George is called upon to fight a duel with Captain Blunt, and when he recovers of his wound it is to find that the *femme fatale,* simply because she is a *femme fatale,* has forsaken him, leaving behind her for remembrance the arrow of gold.

This example of Mr. Conrad in search of himself, Mr. Conrad, a pioneer, surveying the rich untravelled forest landscape of his mind, is extraordinarily revealing. When we think of his fine economy of expression, his spare use of gesture, his power of conveying the mystery of another's being, and contrast it with:

> She listened to me, unreadable, unmoved, narrowed eyes, closed lips, slightly flushed face, as if carved six thousand years ago in order to fix for ever that something secret and obscure which is in all women. Not the gross immobility of a sphinx proposing roadside riddles, but the finer immobility, almost sacred, of a fateful figure seated at the very source of the passions that have moved men from the dawn of ages. . . .

— we are amazed to think of the effort it has cost him to clear that wild luxurious country and to build thereupon his dignified stronghold.

(*August 8, 1919.*)

MR. WALPOLE IN THE NURSERY

Jeremy . . . . . By Hugh Walpole

'I am determined,' says the author, 'to give the truth and nothing but the truth about the years of Jeremy's life that I am describing.'

Jeremy Cole is a normal little English boy of eight.

. . . 'Sausages!' He was across the floor in a moment, had thrown off his nightshirt, and was in his bath. Sausages! He was translated into a world of excitement and splendour. They had sausages so seldom, not always even on birthdays, and to-day, on a cold morning, with a crackling fire and marmalade. . . . Oh, he was happy.

Later that same day he is told that next year he is to go to school.

. . . 'School!' he turned upon her, his eyes wide and staring. 'School!' he turned on them all.

The word tumbled from him. In his soul was a confusion of triumph and dismay, of excitement and loneliness, of the sudden falling from him of all old standards, old horizons, of pride and humility.

A week or two passes, and he is punished for telling a lie by not being allowed to go to the pantomime.

At that judgment a quiver for an instant held Jeremy's face, turning it, for that moment, into something shapeless and old. His heart had given a wild leap of terror and dismay. But he showed no further sign. . . .

The day dragged its weary length along. . . . Once or twice the Jampot tried to penetrate behind that little mask of anger and dismay.

Spring comes. Our eight-year-old leans from the window; 'beneath the rind of the soil he could feel the pushing, heaving life struggling to answer the call of the sun above it.'

And Summer. When, as he drove to the holiday farm, 'the wind blew across the moor, with the smell of sea-pinks and *sea gulls* in it.' When, upon his arrival,

his happiness was almost intolerable; he could not speak, he could not move, and in the heart of his happiness there was

> a strange unhappiness that he had never known before . . . so that he felt like a stranger who was seeing his father or his mother or his aunt for the first time.

We confess we had no idea, until Mr. Walpole put it to us in such good round terms, that a perfectly normal little boy of eight thought and felt like this, especially when, as in the case of this little hero, his external existence was so insufferably dull, tepid, and stodgy.

Jeremy and his sisters spent half their time going for walks with an imbecile old nurse and later with an imbecile old governess, and the other half sitting in the nursery either being good or not being good. Their father, the Rev. Herbert Cole, was an 'excellent father,' but 'the parish absorbed too much of his time to allow for intimacies'; their mother, 'the most placid woman in Europe,' they saw for half-an-hour before bedtime. We are given no sign that the children had any part in the life of the house or any real rich life of their own. Their little thrills, excitements and alarms all seem to have happened between meals, between bacon and strawberry jam, or treacle pudding, or fish pie, or the famous sausages, or saffron buns—a difficult diet to be gay upon. No wonder there are moments when poor Jeremy forgets his spring fancies and sighs—'I'd like to eat jam and jam—lots of it,' he thought. 'It would be fun to be sick. . . ."

But for all the author's determination, 'the truth and nothing but the truth' does not shine through the small heart he would explore. There is, however, no doubt that he enjoyed writing his book. He positively gambols.

> Her teeth clicked as always when her temper was roused, the reason being that thirty years ago the arts and accomplishments of dentistry had not reached so fine a perfection as to-day can show. She had, moreover, bought a cheap set. Her teeth clicked.

As for the publisher,—he will stand no nonsense from anybody.

Jeremy is, indeed, one of the finest child characters ever presented, and in him Mr. Walpole has achieved a triumph.

What is our appropriate *geste* as we bow ourselves out?

(*August 15, 1919.*)

SANS MERCI

The Tender Conscience . . . . By Bohun Lynch

To be a young man with agreeable manners, a tender heart, a large unearned income, and a passion for nothing in particular, is to be a young man doomed. . . . Here he comes, sauntering along the sunny side, laughing, looking his fill at the queer things and the delightful things displayed, making friends at a glance, sunning himself, wondering as he jingles the money whether or no he shall spend it, and blissfully unaware of Life, peering at him from behind the lifted blind, waiting for the moment when, all at once, some one's shouting, he's been cheated, he's been accused, they are pointing at him, the sun's gone in. Until there comes a grim figure to lead him away and she lets the blind fall, muttering in her wicked old triumph: 'I knew it. I could have told you from the moment I set eyes on him. . . .'

This is an everyday occurrence in fiction as well as in life. But while we do not expect the victim to know, at any rate until long after the event, how or why he was captured, we do ask of our author that he should have been on the spot and the witness of every slightest move. Here, surely, is his golden opportunity of engaging our sympathetic attention, of conveying to us the innocence or the stupidity of his hero, of, at least, presenting him to

us in the very centre of the stage, and making us feel how tremendously important it is that he should escape.

Mr. Lynch, who has chosen this theme for 'The Tender Conscience,' withholds the account of his young hero's capture until chapter seven. Then he relates it, retrospectively, we must confess, to our extreme confusion. The book opens with an account of the convalescence after shell-shock of Jimmy Guise at his sister's home in the country. Bathing, and chopping down trees, and playing with the houseful of small children bores Jimmy's wife, who wants — 'London, chocolates — and some cushions . . . and papers first thing in the morning, and air raids, I expect.' So back her adoring husband goes, and because there is a war on, he, who has never done a stroke of work in his life, enters a Government department — again for Blanche's sake.

> . . . Blanche with her lovely helplessness, her charming ennui, her delicious clothes, her exquisite refinement, her loveliness.

Time passes. With the death of one of his friends at the front Jimmy is reminded of a very horrible episode which happened before he and Blanche were 'properly' married. They had supper one Boat-Race Night with three of Jimmy's friends, and under the influence of the wine, he confessed that Blanche was not really his wife. Blanche had never noticed, but ever since then, 'for her sake,' he has been haunted — which brings us to chapter seven and the episode in Athens where Jimmy, travelling alone, picks up with a guide who gives him the history of the little lady with dark-red hair married to an obese old Greek. The guide does not spare her, even to a description of how he'd met her in London when she had a 'very fine mash,' and there is no hint that the lady is anything but bored. But fine, sensitive, lovable, chivalric Jimmy is determined to save her, and she to catch him. They engage a lawyer (the old Greek is only too willing), and while

the entanglement is dissolved they live together in Provence and Paris and London. Thus, to the dismay of all his friends, is Jimmy captured by a woman who, for all that bewildering description of her charms, does not want a home, hates children, enjoys the society of women of filthy reputations, and talks in this strain:

> 'I must finish that fatuous book. Such tripe you never! I think I shall slip on a cloak and go for a walk, and I shall probably get off with a nice young man.'

He suggests she should accompany him, and she is agreeable. 'It's no good being so mighty particular in these days — so long as I don't meet hairy men who smell of beer.'

Frankly, there is not a single hint given why this promiscuous little rowdy should ever have captured this young man; and the idea that she should care whether four young men knew she was not church-married is so preposterous that Jimmy in his agony becomes a figure in the laughing-stocks of our imagination. Mr. Lynch cannot pretend there is a key in such a prison-door; there is indeed no prison — but only a lady with orchids, who never ought to have been there, disappearing to the right, and a thin girl with a baby carriage entering timid.

(*August 22, 1919.*)

HAND MADE

Storm in a Teacup . . . . . By Eden Phillpotts

There were two suitors for Medora's hand: one, Jordan Kellock, a sober, earnest-minded young Socialist, who 'wanted to leave the world better than he found it'; the other, Ned Dingle, a simple, happy-go-lucky fellow, fond of a laugh, and of fishing and shooting. Medora chose Ned Dingle, and chose quite rightly;

he was her very man. But she would have liked to have Kellock, too. For she was one of that vast number of young women who have no real individual being and no convictions — save that they could be an inspiration and a star to any number of entirely different young men. What tragedy, then, to be married to one who is arrogant (and loving) enough to imagine that he has the whole of her, who would even laugh to scorn the notion of those undiscovered mines of varied treasure. . . .

Such simplicity and uprightness not only exasperated Medora, but succeeded in pushing into the free air and light her preposterous flowers of longing. Ned wasn't good enough for her, and Kellock was a saint of a man and far above her. This changed, as she brooded over it, into: Ned was horrible to her, and Kellock alone could save. Up they came, the false feelings, so strong and so sturdy that they seemed out of her control; they seemed real and none of her planting. Until Ned Dingle was a villain who beat his wife and all Kellock could do was to take her away and promise her marriage as soon as they were 'free.' But instead of the fine adventure she had anticipated, the going away proved a rod that beat Medora back into her senses. For Kellock held her in such reverence as a poor martyr with the almost divine courage to leave all and come to him that it was easy for him to treat her as a sister while they waited for their freedom. Then Medora turned and twisted, threw him the ugly mask she had worn and went back to her husband, positively refreshed by the affair, with the renewed love of life and gaiety and gentleness of a convalescent.

The 'Storm in a Teacup' rages in a little village on a hillside, on the banks of the river Dart. The little village is full of life, for above the small neat houses lying in their gardens and smothering apple orchards there rises a huge building — Dene Mill — where beautiful hand-made paper is produced. The conditions necessary to its production are good air, sunlight, running

water, exquisite cleanliness, and above all honest workmen who not only take a pride in their craft, but are eager for the reputation of their mill. This engaging state of affairs sounds fantastic, nowadays, yet Mr. Phillpotts, by describing every separate stage of manufacture, bringing us in touch with the men and women engaged, showing us how beautiful is a vatman's fine 'stroke,' what disaster it were to lose it, succeeds in making us believe in its existence. His three central figures are workers at the mill, and their comedy of character is acted before a shrewd, exacting audience of fellow-workers, admirably portrayed.

What an oasis is this in the sooty desert of novels whose *milieu* is the factory — powerful novels, slices of life, reeking, bawling novels, where the heroine is none the worse for a fight with hat-pins against her mother, for preference, and the hero breaks up the home for a burnt bloater!

(*August 29, 1919.*)

THE 'SEX-COMPLEX'

The Sleeping Partner . . . . By M. P. Willcocks

If there is one character in modern English fiction whom we wish with all our heart the Boojum would call for, it is the man or woman who from childhood up has suffered from what our psycho-analytical skimmings have taught us to call the sex-complex. It were foolish to deny that a large number of young persons have been severely handicapped, not so much by their parents telling them of the cabbage and the angel with a black bag in reply to their infant speculations as by their healthy adolescent curiosity being treated as a disease so disgusting that they must be kept in the dark at all costs and never told the unpleasant — if sacred — truth. But it were equally foolish to deny that the progress towards light of these unfortunate ones

makes heavy reading. What we do not know about it is not for want of telling; it has been during the past few years the pet subject of our young writers to break a pen upon. But there is a rarer version; that of the sensitive child cursed with dissolute sex-ridden parents whom only to watch is poison enough, and this it is that Miss Willcocks has chosen. At the age of thirteen, her hero, Silas Brutton, was taken by his foxy old father, Nicky Brutton, the publisher, to see the prisoners at Portland Gaol. And a peculiarly odious servile convict was pointed out to them as having on one and the same evening received chapel membership and criminally assaulted a child. This story Brutton *père* found admirable . . . 'as a man of the world the character of the crime tickled his sense of humour . . .' but the episode infected the boy with the disease which was to ruin more than half his life. From that day he was fit for nothing but to be sickened by what he saw and heard. Life to him was so odious with its 'human spawning' and 'tide of birth' that when his father died, leaving him the publishing business, he let all slide because of his horror of the kind of stuff — 'the goat's foot among the vine leaves' — that the old man had built his house upon.

> 'Warped' (he cries), 'of course it's left me warped. But the worst of it is that in publishing there seems to be no mean between Sunday School piffle and this painted harlotry. . . .'

It is curious that the author seems to find something extraordinarily fine, pitiful and 'lovable' in Silas. As for his brother Ned, who wrests the business from him, we are dismally conscious of failing to share the approval of his proper masculinity, his passion for 'comfort' (which being interpreted is a natty little woman, rather red in the face, taking a pie out of the oven), his recklessness and jolly way of seeing things through. We are to believe that Ned is the kind of man that women adore; he is the big child beating on the table with his spoon who is and

ever shall be irresistible. We confess that after we have been forced to watch him at table the whole book through, and then come upon: 'he had been looking anxiously for that slight ooziness in the middle of the omelet that makes its perfection,' we wish him dead.

But to return to Silas. He finds salvation in a brave, splendid little girl, Nan Carey, whose passion is biology.

> 'Look,' cried she, 'at the way science gets her own back — after silly vapouring: there she shows the processes of birth and burgeoning, of begetting and conception, from the dance of the atoms to the birth . . . of a child-animal.' . . . Silas found himself taken right into the inner chamber of his own fears, of his own disgusts. To Nan, the blind principle of fecundity from which he shrank . . . was . . . the ocean of life in which she sported. . . .'

This, and a very great deal more of it, convinces him; the stream of life runs fair, 'while before, as far as he was concerned, it had been stifled in slime.' 'And,' to quote Miss Willcocks's final words, 'the moon and the stars carried on till the dawn once more snuffed them out.'

(*August 29, 1919.*)

MR. DE MORGAN'S LAST BOOK

The Old Madhouse . . . . . By W. de Morgan

At the conclusion of 'The Old Madhouse' there is a very illuminating little note by Mrs. de Morgan explaining her husband's method of working. She relates how he prepared no plot beforehand, but 'created his characters and then waited for them to act and evolve their own plot . . . he waited, as he expressed it, "to see what they would do next."' It is not that we

consider the method itself unusual or remarkable; but what is peculiar to Mr. de Morgan is the length of time he was prepared to wait, not only his unlimited patience at spiritual railway stations, but the feeling he produces that the waiting, with all its little disturbances and attractions, is really more agreeable than the arrival. In fact the longer he can stave off what Henry James has called 'the august emergence' of his travellers the better he is pleased. Even when it is so long overdue as to cause anxiety and then alarm and then apprehension, he cannot surrender himself fully to these emotions so as to be overcome, but rather, as it were, takes an occasional 'nip' at one or the other of them to refresh his excitement and revivify his sense of anticipation. This, of course, makes it impossible for his words to be serious in 'the grand style'; but his sense of humour is extremely engaging (especially as directed towards youth), his curiosity very reckless and unrestrained, he knows just how large a pinch of sentimentality will stimulate our jaded sympathies, and he has a taking way with the lower orders, with small children and pet animals. Added to these he has a habit, which either you like, or dislike very much, of taking the reader into his confidence, half-naïvely, half-slyly . . . a kind of 'But aren't you yourself completely floored by this disappearance of Doctor Carteret? Can you, for the life of you, imagine what has happened to the old fellow?' At that the young wild horses will stamp their hoofs and break away from the leisurely hand, but those of us who are inclined to enjoy an occasional small bout of mental convalescence — a day in bed, watching the lights chase the shadows — will suffer this gladly.

'The Old Madhouse' is Mr. de Morgan's last bouquet; Death beckoned before the final blooms had been gathered. How long the novel would have been it were rash to suggest, for there are five hundred and fifty-five pages of it and still the character who disappeared on page twenty-three is not accounted for. He is the

Rev. Drury Carteret, a man six foot high, weighing twenty stone, headmaster of a grammar school; a very difficult figure to cause to melt into thin air. Nevertheless the author manages it and most convincingly; now he is there, standing in a passage at The Cedars (commonly known as The Old Madhouse because its last tenant was a doctor who took mental patients), and now he is not there — gone, vanished, never to be seen in the solid flesh again. His only relations appear to be Frederic Carteret, a nephew, whose trustee he is, and Fred's mother, his sister-in-law, with whom he has been for twenty years and more romantically and hopelessly in love. It was on Fred's behalf that he was at The Cedars; for Fred (a handsome young fellow of whom all were agreed that if he would only concentrate he could do anything) was about to be married and had chosen the long-deserted house with its vast apartments, eighteen bedrooms and dismal reputation as an ideal *premier nid* — especially when he hits upon the superb idea of sharing it with his great friend Charlie (or Nosey) Smith, who is similarly bound to a beautiful young creature whom he burns to watch walking up and down their own stairs. But Fred's dream disappears, too, though not so mysteriously. His young woman feels, and quite rightly, that after he has set eyes on Nosey Smith's Lucy he is never wholly hers again. This is preposterous, but it is true. So Charlie and Lucy buy the Old Madhouse, and Fred, who is, of course, perfectly safe because of his great love for Charlie, spends there all the time that he does not devote to his mother and the search for Uncle Dru. What has happened to him? Why was the body never found? But the only one of them whose anxiety is not mainly curiosity is Mrs. Carteret. Fred feels through her when he is with her, but when he is absent even his interest seems to flag. How, otherwise, could he hear a loud voice calling in the passage where the Doctor was last seen: 'Come back, Fred!' and be content with 'any' explanation, even when the phenomenon

occurs three times? How could he know that the doctor's ghost, his substantial back view, is seen by nearly everybody, at the same spot, and never attempt to investigate any farther?

The truth is that the poor young man is bewitched by a ravishing serpent. Gradually, dreadfully against his will, he is drawn nearer and nearer. There comes a moment when he just escapes being swallowed, and manages to tell his mother, who rushes him to Switzerland, but it is only for a moment. The serpent follows, Fred is eaten, Charlie's happiness and faith in life destroyed, and Mrs. Carteret's unhappiness immeasurably increased. In this evil hour the ghost of the lost man not only appears, but is ushered into a little study by the housemaid who takes him for real. He has come, too late, to warn the absent Fred, but it is Charlie who takes the message and is as certain of his reality as the housemaid. His conclusion is that the doctor is mad and must be watched as he leaves the house, but while he is away for three minutes, giving orders to the gardeners to be on the look-out, the inevitable happens. No one is there on his return — no one . . . and here Mr. de Morgan laid aside his pen.

So there is in the middle of the picture this immense old hero, avuncular, obese and kindly, leaning on his umbrella, blowing a sostenuto blast on his nose and saying 'char-char!' to all the stupid questions. Everything is grouped round him, dependent on him; he is the figure who causes the roundabout to swing and glitter and turn, and yet he is a man of air.

His fate is made known to us by Mrs. de Morgan; but how much pleasanter it is to ignore the trap-door, the lunatic bath and the grating, and remain in the dark.

(*September 5, 1919.*)

A LANDSCAPE WITH PORTRAITS

Tamarisk Town . . . . . By Sheila Kaye-Smith

Were Miss Kaye-Smith a painter, we should be inclined to say that we do not feel she has yet made up her mind which it is that she wishes most to paint — whether landscape or portraits. Which is it to be? Landscape — the blocking-in of a big difficult scheme, the effort required to make it appear substantial and convincing, the opportunity it gives her for the bold, sweeping line — it is plain to see how strongly this attracts her. Portraits — there is a glamour upon the human beings she chooses which fascinates her, and which she cannot resist. Why should she not be equally at home with both? What is her new novel 'Tamarisk Town' but an attempt to see them in relation to each other? And yet, in retrospect, there is her town severely and even powerfully painted, and there are her portraits, on the same canvas, and yet so out of it, so separate that the onlooker's attention is persistently divided — it flies between the two, and is captured by neither.

Her theme is the development of a small Sussex town into a select seaside resort, patronized by the wealthy and aristocratic, not on account of its natural beauties alone, but because of the taste and judgment with which its reformation has been achieved. There is a time when it seems established in its enchanting prosperity for ever, but the hour of its triumph contains the seeds of its downfall. Very gradually, and then more swiftly, it is attacked by vulgarians, who are allowed to have their way, until at the end, wretched, shoddy, decayed little place that it is become, it is the scene of a brawl between drunken trippers. *Sic transit gloria Marlingate.*

It is, of course, absurd to imagine that Marlingate could grow, come to flower, blow to seed, without the aid of man, and yet at the moments when Miss Kaye-Smith is least conscious of the forces that govern it, she is at her happiest. Wandering at will in

the Assembly Rooms, in the beautiful little Town Park, along the white, gleaming parade, in the woods at French Landing, her style is very natural and unforced, and, until the beginning of the disintegrating process, her touch is light. But, after all, this is only the landscape half. Let us examine the 'portraits.' The chief is Edward Monypenny, creator of Marlingate, who, at the age of twenty-eight, is in a position powerful enough to determine the future of the town. This curious young man, with his shock of white hair, coal-black eyes and black side whiskers, is, for all his cynical aloofness, in love with Marlingate; we are to believe that, until he meets with the little wild governess, he has never known what it was to feel for anything more responsive than a new block of houses or a bandstand. But she, Morgan, Morgan le fay, running out of the wood with dead leaves in her hair, very nearly makes havoc of his resolute ambition in the old, old way.

> . . . She had crept towards him, drooping like a wild hyacinth in her blue gown. Then suddenly she flung her body straight, flung back her head, her arms were round him soft and strong as fox-glove stalks, and her hair, falling loose, trailed on his lips till it tasted sweet as syllabub.

But while she is still a woodland elf, his old love wins:

> He turned back to Marlingate, as a man who has left his work to watch from the window an organ-grinder with a performing monkey turns to his desk again.

Years pass, and all his dreams are realized. Royalty has put its special blessing upon Marlingate, and Monypenny is Mayor, in cocked hat and black and crimson robes. And this is the hour chosen by the enchantress for her return — in scarlet. 'Crimson and silky, a peony trailing its crinkled petals . . . it came.'

This time the long, slanting eyes eat him up with their spells, and she has her way with him.

> Then she dropped her sunshade, which rolled in a whirl of scarlet down the slope, like a poppy falling, and stretching out her hands, took his white, struggle-worn face into their cool palms, drawing it down to her silent mouth.

It is a matter for wonder that, in spite of all the many pages describing the progress of their guilty love, in spite of the tremendous pains taken by the author to depict the agonies of Monypenny upon his discovering that sweet Morgan le fay holds in contempt, nay hates, his beloved Marlingate, and the other tremendous pains taken to show Morgan's despair upon realizing that Edward will not flee with her to foreign parts — we are never once moved by these two creatures. Marionettes they are, and marionettes they remain, jigging in a high fierce light that Miss Kaye-Smith would convince us is the fire of passion, until the last puppet-quarrel and the last glimpse of the heroine, 'half under the water, half trailing on the rock . . . something which, from the top of the cliff, looked like a dead crimson leaf.' This extreme measure is for love of Monypenny, who, at first, is properly grateful for his freedom. Again he is a man like a town walking, until one day he is filled with the idea that his first love is fattening upon the dead body of his second love, and that, after all, a woman is more to be desired than bricks and mortar. This starts working passion number three — he will kill that which killed her, and so have his revenge.

Here, to our thinking, the book ends. All that is going to happen has happened; we are at the top of the hill. Below us lies Marlingate, in its prosperity, 'lying there licked by the sun,' and gazed upon by the man who has made it, and is about to unmake it. But the author is, if we may be pardoned the expression, as fresh as when she started. New characters appear — a wife for Monypenny, a little wooden son who has time to grow up and marry the daughter of Morgan le fay (so like, yet so unlike)

and to live his father's history all over again before Marlingate is destroyed. And the years roll by, unbroken, heavy, like waves slapping against the promenade, the vulgar pier, before Miss Kaye-Smith is content to leave Marlingate to its fate.

How does it happen that a writer, obviously in love with writing, is yet not curious? This is the abiding impression left us by Miss Kaye-Smith; she is satisfied to put into the mouths and the hearts and minds of her characters the phrase, the emotion, the thought that 'fits' the situation, with the result that it does not seem to matter whether they speak, feel or think. Nothing is gained by it. They are just what they are. The plot's the thing — and having decided upon it she gets her team together and gives out the parts. There is but to speak them. And into the hand of Morgan le fay she thrusts a scarlet umbrella, she throws a cherry cloak about her and clothes her in a scarlet dress — and sets her going.

(*September 12, 1919.*)

LIONS AND LAMBS

Susan Lenox . . . . . By David Graham Philips

It would seem to have been the desire of Mr. Graham Philips to do for his subject, 'Susan Lenox,' the same service that Tchehov declared to have been his intention to perform for the subject of 'Ivanov.' With his 'Ivanov' he wanted to put an end, once and for all, to a typical character — that of the suppressed, melancholy man, the failure, the half-cynical unfortunate, rejected by life, but acclaimed by modern Russian literature as the child of the age. The method he chose was to write a play whose hero was the embodiment not only of all these known characteristics, but of all possible developments of which they might be the fruitful soil. Feeling as he did that 'Ivanov' was the vague, easy temptation

for Russian writers to yield to, he wished to leave nothing undiscovered, nothing unremarked, so that this subject at least, after his treatment of it, should be 'out of court.'

Now the chief concern of modern American fiction, as far as our knowledge of it goes, is sex. It is not treated humorously, as in France, or intensely, as in England; it is treated seriously. There are many moments when our American cousin makes us feel we are only foolish, inexperienced children as far as this great subject is concerned. We are David and Dora, giving each other bouquets, and laughing and loving, and kissing the little dog and kissing each other, and America is the grim Julia with her 'Play on, ye may-flies.' But, after all, the cause of Julia's disillusionment was never quite plain, and the reason for America's is right there, to be picked up in the next magazine you open: it is the ferocity of man. Make no mistake about it, man, whatever disguise he may affect, however young, husky and brilliant he may be, however old, senile and ugly, from the millionaire downwards, is nothing but a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. It is not his fault; he may resist it; he may put up the most devastating fight while the lights of little old New York burn as brightly as ever; he may read poetry, weep, or, grim-faced, in his revolving chair with telephone attached, before his immense roll-top bureau, he may make a vow, before the photograph of a sweet-faced little woman with white hair, to see this thing through. A lion or a lion *manqué* he remains. On the other hand, he may not resist it; and then his wildness and capacity for devouring are more terrific than anything Europe has encountered.

As is usual in such cases, to get the full fine flavour of the hunting you must sing the innocence and tenderness of the prey. The American young girl — the Bud — the Millionaire's daughter who has never grown up — how well we know her! How exquisite she is! how fresh! how new to the light! What a sight,

growing and blowing in Momma and Poppa's garden, for the wicked lion as he peeps through a hole in the garden wall!

All this the magazine and the novel are founded on. But, after all, they have never done more than treat of one particular example at a time of villainy and innocence. Each American writer has been content with his corner of the hunting field, and disinclined to wander, though all have been united into one great company over the choice of subject, the lamb fleeing the lion. We imagine that Mr. Graham Philips, after a grand survey, has sickened of modern America's typical characters as Tchehov wearied. And so he has given us, in two packed volumes, Susan Lenox. He has taken his time; he has not faltered. There is not a corner of the vast ground, not a pit, not a slimy ditch, not a stinking heap, not a glittering restaurant, that he has left unprobed. Man, the lion, roars, and Susan, sweet, pure, with her white swelling bosom, her alluring ankles and eyes that are now grey, now deepest violet, flees. . . .

There may be perhaps a question whether Tchehov has succeeded in doing what he set out to do. But in the case of the American author there can be no doubt, no shadow of doubt whatever.

(*September 19, 1919.*)

DEA EX MACHINA

A Man and His Lesson . . . By W. B. Maxwell

Those readers who are accustomed to, and, indeed, confess a fondness for, the delicate preliminaries of a performance — the light rush of arpeggios, the few inquiring chords, the little silence — will find themselves strangely shaken and surprised by the first chapter of 'A Man and his Lesson.' Alas, poor souls! they will barely have settled themselves, barely have furled their

fans and opened their programmes before p. 14, and there is the hero standing up and bowing, the heroine looking back at him from the doorway, kissing the tips of her fingers, their *grande passion,* that only began on p. 5, enjoyed and resigned, and the first item on the programme, in fact, over and done with.

Certainly, the circumstances were exceptional. Bryan Vaile, playwright and barrister, did not start life until the age of thirty-three. 'Till then all had been colourless.' Then, for no reason he could explain, the world smiled and he plunged — into the blue-blooded sea of London aristocracy. The mermaid, the siren who lifted a white arm to him, was Diana Kenion, the greatest beauty and the most celebrated young woman in Mayfair. Tall, slender, exquisite — a nymph in blue gauze, charming the Prime Minister, the Archbishop of Canterbury, painters and poets, alike, she had but to beckon. After being with her 'he was like a mortal emptied and exhausted by divine excesses. He was not an ordinary young man going home to bed — he had fallen from Olympian heights. . . .'

But she cannot understand why he has not a telephone. He has one installed. And sometimes she rings him up very early in the morning, and 'while he listened he thought of her standing with sandalled feet among daffodils . . . with the sunbeams touching her bare arm and neck. . . .' And her telephone? Or late at night when 'he heard her give a little sigh that was like a breath of air in the foliage of the dark grove where she was lying down to rest.' With her telephone? And she cannot understand why he has no money. If he had made a real success. . . . 'Oh, how I would shove you along!' But he has not made it and she loves money, so 'Good-bye' it must be, and 'Good-bye' it is.

With the exit of Diana the pace becomes more normal. The scene is Bournemouth and the heroine is Mabel, warm and plump and brown. This time he is her Diana, her hero, her

knight who cuts the cords that bind the young girl to the tree, and he treats her as Diana had treated him. No, for at heart he is 'not a bad sort really,' and so they marry, and acquire children, money, success, a house in Regent's Park and quite a number of friends. 'On a warm July Sunday there would be sometimes as many as a hundred and fifty or two hundred people in the garden.' We do not know to what extent Mabel and Bryan enjoyed these parties, but the author simply cannot tear himself away. 'The Man and his Lesson' fade and are forgotten while he shows us round the garden, introducing, explaining, and crying the delightful news that 'Mr. Odo Mainz, the composer, with his wife and clever, charming daughters, came frequently, but never as frequently as his hosts would wish,' etc., until, nobly sacrificing his enjoyment, he produces 'on a patch of gravel in front of the verandah' Diana again, now the wife of the Duke of Middlesborough.

But this time there is Mabel, the sanctity of home life, his reputation, the good opinion of London's dramatic critics to be considered; Diana has to use her telephone quite desperately before he is won back. Four days and nights of bliss, and he returns to Mabel and the children a ruined man, determined to take veronal before his disgrace is made known. But in that dark hour the housemaid brings in the *Daily Mail* — and war is declared between England and Germany. Hurrah for August, 1914! He is saved. Off he goes to be honourably killed. Off he goes to the greatest of all garden parties — and this time there is no doubt as to his enjoying himself. War has its black side, but the lessons — the lessons it teaches a man! Where else shall a man learn the value of brotherly love, the wisdom and friendliness of the generals at the Base, the beauty of Mr. Lloyd George's phrase 'the War to end war,' the solid worth and charm of a London restaurant, a London club, a London theatre? Diana died while the garden party was at its liveliest, and Vaile was

thus freed to live, to be wounded, to confess his fault to Mabel, and to be forgiven. So, after having 'come out again to the grand old task,' to 'strike another blow for England and the cause,' Bryan Vaile is free to go home, having learned his last and greatest lesson, which is never to answer the telephone again.

(*September 26, 1919.*)

SENSITIVENESS

Desire and Delight . . . . . By F. E. Penny

She was known at the hospital in Poona as Nurse Mary, and nobody but Jimmy Dumbarton, the young surgeon-in-charge, knew that her real name was Rosemary Edenhope, and that she was a married woman. This was her story. At the beginning of the war, at her lover's calling, she had come out to India with 'a wedding costume complete with veil and orange blossom,' to find, on the morning of her arrival, that her beloved is ordered to start for Egypt the very afternoon of that day. Why can't they go to the Cathedral straight away? 'She had to be informed there were still certain preliminaries that must be effected before the marriage could take place.'

'My own love! I must go!'

A year passes. To tide over the waiting she turns hospital nurse. Then he returns — but not the handsome, well set-up, clean-shaven officer to whom she had clung in her 'abandonment of love and grief'; a gaunt bearded man, with haggard face and semi-scorched eyes, stood before her. But, bravely believing that it is only fatigue, she tells him she has arranged for their marriage on the morrow, and for their honeymoon in the hills. But the change is more than beard deep. Maurice is silent, sombre, giving her no return for her kisses, waking to animation only to wonder

whether lunch is ready. After a gloomy lunch, afternoon, and dinner, she asks him if he would like to postpone to-morrow's ceremony.

> Her sweetness and love, her readiness to sacrifice herself for him, should have been an irresistible appeal. It left him colder than ever.

Nevertheless, his answer is 'No, no!' And so she takes him to the church, finds Jimmy Dumbarton to give her away, sees that he is married to her, buys his railway ticket for him, and starts him off on their honeymoon to the bungalow called 'Desire and Delight.'

All that a loving, brave, right-minded young woman could do Rosemary has done, but the poor wretch continues woe-begone and dreary, moving like a man in a dream. What can have happened to him? Could a year at Gallipoli spent among the dead and dying account for it? His eyes had definitely altered. . . . 'Other eyes had looked into his with the coming of death, and seemed to have left their reflection.' And when the adoring Rosemary asks him if he would like the bungalow re-arranged (for there are two single bedrooms at present), pinched, haggard and listless, he signifies 'No.' She bears it for a month. Then:

> 'You are a wicked man and I hate you! I hate you! . . . I would have given you my life as I gave you my love. . . . I go out of your life, bearing your hated name, thanking you for nothing, and cursing you for having spoiled my life.'

They part at this, and she resumes her V.A.D. work, where she finds 'scope for the generous sympathy and warm affection towards suffering humanity that was her second nature.'

Another interval — we are not told how long — and the news comes that Maurice Edenhope is appointed commandant of the hospital where she is working. What shall she do? How shall

she meet him? Has she forgiven him? Does a woman ever forgive such a blow to her — pride. Jimmy Dumbarton puts off the uncomfortable day for her. In the same hospital there is a fine young native officer whose convalescence is retarded by his longing for his young wife. Nurse Mary is appointed to take him home to his palace and to stay with him until he is well, and her disaster with Edenhope is almost forgotten in her heroic attempts to overcome the intrigues of the harem and to bring the ardent young man and his bride together. Alone, single-handed, she fights the superstitions, powers, poisons, mock-tigers, attempts at murder, which are her daily portion, and at last succeeds, and has the satisfaction of hearing the door bolted and barred upon the fortunate ones. But their bliss looks in her face; its name is Might-have-been. And when Colonel Edenhope calls to inquire after nurse and patient, though, of course, her love is still quite, quite dead, she overdoes her free-and-easy indifference. The beard has gone, too. He is *soigné* as of old, and full of that vitality which once upon a time compelled her. He, on his side, is more attracted than ever. ' She was the embodiment of perfect womanhood upon whom no man could look without admiration and no husband or lover without desire.' ' Sweetest woman on earth . . . Am I going to have any luck? It won't be a walk-over. . . .'

Yes. For in an expansive moment he confides in Jimmy Dumbarton the history of his illness caused by his awful sufferings in Gallipoli, and how he had been driven half mad and was cured by open-air treatment in Scotland. Books, the latest novels, flowers and kindness, have failed to soften Rosemary, but this tale melts her. And he kisses her to ' Maurice! husband! kiss me! again! again! I am starving for want of your love.'

Back once more to the bungalow, and this time there has been an alteration in the arrangement of the rooms with Colonel Edenhope's most ardent approval.

Throughout this novel the author is at great pains to assure us

of the heroine's charm. She is the best type of young English womanhood; it is, indeed, she, and women like her, who have made the British Empire what it is. Women like Rosemary, once they have secured their Edenhope, will send him off to the wars without a murmur, hear of his being wounded with a thrill of pride, and confide in their best friends that 'even if Maurice died I suppose I should just have to carry on.' They might, also, nurse in hospitals for months on end, and mark the terrible things that happen to a man's mind as well as his body, and still be capable of acting towards another as this newly-wedded wife acted. Why not? Surely love is stronger than war-shock? Surely, faced by a fine blooming young woman, a man should be able to forget everything else?

'Her sensitive nature,' says Mrs. Penny. But, no! That we cannot allow. She is as true to life as you like; as common, as popular; we are ready to believe she may be found any day in *Society Faces* or the *Lady's Magazine*. But sensitive — never! Pray take away the word, Mrs. Penny. For her strength depends upon her denial of it.

(*October 3, 1919.*)

PORTRAITS AND PASSIONS

September . . . . . By Frank Swinnerton

Perhaps it is owing to the composure and deliberation of Mr. Swinnerton's style in this his new novel that we are sensible of a slight chill in the air long before Marion Sinclair discovers that she is in the September of her life. We are given, at the very outset, a full-length and highly finished portrait of her: Portrait of a Lady, *ætat.* thirty-eight — blond, beautiful, extraordinarily reserved, 'completely, it seemed, mistress of herself in every emergency.' She has been married for fifteen years to a wealthy

City man whom she knows thoroughly well and is clever enough not to despise. She is childless and without relatives or intimate friends, but in the country, where she spends the greater part of the year, her neighbours find her mysterious enough and sympathetic enough to make them wish to confide in her, even while they feel 'rather ashamed in her company of their own silliness and passion for excitement.' Fond of flowers, enthusiastic over her bees, a good tennis-player, playing the piano with a sensitive touch, though without technical equipment enough for Chopin's Ballade in A Flat — does the author mean to be cruel or to be kind in thus describing her? We are never wholly certain, but having her thus framed and glazed, we are rather acutely conscious of his task when he proceeds to turn the lady into flesh and blood.

The first shock administered is a slight but unexpected one. Offering her husband the cigarettes one evening: 'What are they?' he demanded. 'Two-toed Twins?' And she realizes almost immediately that the silly name is a joke he has with another woman, and that he is being unfaithful to her. . . . 'She is a little resentful.' Then some neighbours come to dinner, bringing with them a nephew, Nigel Sinclair, a handsome young man of twenty-six, with a very ardent, naïve way of talking that stirs her strangely. . . . Finally, two young people come to visit her, one of whom, Cherry Mant, a girl of twenty, is of the very nature of Spring. She is not gentle May, but rather early April, or even late March — for there are moments when she is wild and treacherous — a little savage, trying to destroy her own flowers, a little fury, with a needle of ice unmelted in her heart. But there are other moments when she is Beauty, untouched and unbroken, smiling at the sun and at Marion and Marion's husband. The ideas, emotions and suggestions that she evokes in Marion seem inexhaustible; she might be the first young woman whom the older woman had ever encountered. Every glance of hers is a

surprise and a wonder, and when Marion discovers her locked in her husband's arms, her astonishment is not particular; it is all a part of her endless astonishment. Cherry, on her side, is drawn to Marion. She has a longing to confide in the older woman, to try and explain her puzzling self, to try and find out why she is Cherry, but nothing comes out of these intense, emotional dialogues; Cherry is still baffling, and Marion is still wise:

> 'Aren't I funny!' whispered Cherry. 'You're not funny.'
> 'At any rate I'm not unfunny,' protested Marion.

These words occur at the close of one of their most poignant interviews. There is no hint from the author that he does not mean them to be taken *au grand sérieux,* but we shudder to consider how many female conversations have ended on precisely that note.

On the very day that Cherry and Howard are discovered together, to comfort Marion's pride comes Nigel Sinclair. He is young, he is twenty-six, and he admires her. He never thinks of her as old — only as 'wonderful' — and so September defies Spring. Love comes to Marion, ardent, burning love; her quiet untroubled summer is over. The leaves are touched with gold, but it is not yet Autumn; there is a brilliance in these late flowers that mocks the other blossoms of the year. And yet there is an anguish, too, a bitterness. Through it all she is haunted by the vision of Cherry. How can Cherry live so lightly — love so lightly? Be one thing to-day and another to-morrow? Is she evil, is she a 'wanton,' or just a child, or just a young creature helpless because there has never been anyone to help her? Marion cannot decide, but it is as though Cherry has stolen her peace of mind and will not say where she has hidden it away, and Marion is too proud to ask. And in some strange way it is because of Cherry that Marion denies Nigel when he asks her to prove her love. Then begins her real agony. She has never known what it

was to love ' like this.' How could she have known. It is September love — the late love that women are supposed to long for and to dread. And when her misery is at its height, Nigel comes to tea and she offers him one of the fatal cigarettes.

> ' Hullo! ' he cried in a puzzled way. ' Do you smoke old Two-toed-Twins? '

It is Cherry's name for them. When Marion recovers from this final shock, she begins, as it were, to step back into her frame. She decides, after ' a frenzy of jealousy,' that Cherry and Nigel are meant for each other, and it is only through her recovered sympathy and understanding that they are saved from drifting apart.

> ' So marriage will be very difficult for you, and it's only if you try hard to be considerate, and find your happiness in Nigel's happiness, that the marriage will succeed. . . .'

These are among her final words, and we feel they are just what she would have spoken before she stepped out of her frame. They are the words of advice given by the Portrait of a Lady, *ætat.* thirty-eight, blond, beautiful, and with enough air of mystery to invite confidences. . . . In her frame she could not be more convincing, but out of it — do such ladies ever escape? Do they not rather step into other frames? Portrait of a Lady in Love, Portrait of a Jealous Lady — and then a whole succession of ' problem ' portraits: Nigel lighting a Two-toed-Twin cigarette with Marion looking on, and Howard and Cherry embracing in the wood with Marion looking through the leaves. They are most carefully, most conscientiously painted, but we are not held. What has happened to Marion, to Nigel, Cherry and Howard? Nothing. They have weathered the storm, and dawn finds them back again in the same harbour from which they put out — none the worse or the better for their mock voyage. We cannot help

recalling the words of an old-fashioned Music Professor: 'My child, leave the "expression" out, you are playing a study. One does not put "expression" into studies.' Is it possible that Mr. Swinnerton even ever so slightly agrees with him — or would like to agree with him? And what do we mean exactly by that word 'expression'? Can we afford to leave it out of a page, of a paragraph — after Tchehov?

(*October 10, 1919.*)

HUMOUR AND HEAVINESS

Poor Relations . . . . . By Compton Mackenzie
Time and Eternity . . . . . By Gilbert Cannan

Why is it those favoured few whose privilege it is to be invited, like fairies, to pronounce a blessing or a curse upon the new novel are invariably condescending and even a trifle contemptuous if the babe be a smiling babe? There are times, indeed, when from their manner one would imagine they half-suspected the innocent radiant creature of being the result of a youthful folly, — a love child. And though, of course, as broad-minded men of the world, they can excuse — nevertheless: 'Now that you have had your little flutter we hope that you will settle down and produce something serious.'

To be taken seriously in England a novelist must be serious. Poets may be as gay as they please, story-tellers (especially as nobody will publish short stories) as light-hearted as they wish, but if a young man desires to be told (and who does not?) that he is in the front rank, the head of, leading, far outstepping, immeasurably in advance of, all other novelists of the day, he must be prepared to father fiends hid in clouds.

Perhaps another reason for the cool reception of the novel that is not serious is that English people, as a whole, would a great

deal rather feel interested, critical, moved and excited than amused. A really serious novel by a brilliant young man flatters them almost as greatly as if that brilliant young man were to appear before them and to beg them to listen to the story of his life. They feel he presupposes them to possess powers of sympathy and of discernment so extraordinary that it would be ridiculous and below their mutual dignity to waste his time and theirs upon anything that did not call those powers into action. This is very gratifying, but it does not contribute to the gaiety of letters. May we never be amused in our own day? Must we always turn to those words which have been blessed by time or are come from France? We confess to moments when we long to find ourselves at a feast or at a fairing instead of accompanying our young Hamlet to the graveyard and watching and listening while he picks up his first skull and wonders at it. . . .

A glance at the press opinions published at the back of Mr. Mackenzie's latest novel suffices to show the position he occupies among these, our young masters. Each new book of his has provoked his literary godfathers to a fresh shower of blessings, a heavier rain of gifts. From the very first, they recognized him as one of the young men who were going to count, and nobly has he repaid that recognition, passing from strength to strength, from intensity to intensity until with his adventures of Sylvia Scarlett he reached the pitch of high seriousness they had prophesied he should.

But instead of remaining there, instead of preparing for an even sterner climb, he has descended from his cloudy, thunderous eminence into a valley where we hope he may be tempted to linger. Here, to our thinking, is his proper climate, and here he has every appearance of being most admirably at home; and his enjoyment of the scene is so evident that we are inclined to hope he does not look upon it as a mere picnic ground, a place of

refreshment from which he will turn now that the holiday is over.

'Poor Relations' is an account of the dreadful sufferings that were put upon Mr. John Touchwood, the highly successful playwright, by his highly unsuccessful family. He was a bachelor and he was family-ridden. By nature he was highly romantic, sentimental, over-generous and over-sensitive, and liable on the slightest provocation to 'rosify' events and persons. This rosification, until he met Miss Hamilton, had prevented him from ever looking upon his relatives with a critical eye. It wasn't enough that Mama was Mama, Edith was Edith, and even Hugh was Hugh. But that calm, self-possessed young woman sitting opposite to them in the saloon of the *Murmania,* by a chance remark to her travelling companion made him see them, just for one moment, as they really were. He had barely finished reading 'five delightful letters, really, every one of them full of good wishes and cordial affection'; but after her 'I've never been a poor relation yet, and I don't intend to start now,' he read them through again, and this time they were the letters, the unmistakable letters, of poor relations.

John had a house in Hampstead where he was completely looked after and bullied in a mild but insistent way by his housekeeper, Mrs. Worfolk. He had another, a country house 'kept' for him by Mama and his widowed sister, Hilda, and Hilda's dear little boy, Harold. What he wished to do, upon his return from America, was to divide his time between his two houses and write an extraordinarily fine play on the subject of Joan of Arc. But he had no time to divide. He only had a family — determined in their several ways to get out of him all there was to be got, and had it not been for Miss Hamilton's remark, we see no reason why he should not have been the innocent and half-willing victim. She saved him. She becomes his confidential secretary and, at the happy ending, his wife. But what he endured before that was reached

makes the most excellent and amusing reading. The Touchwood family is one of those detestable, fascinating families that we cannot have enough of.

From the moment they are seated round the dining-room table —

> at the head of which John took his rightful place; opposite to him, placid as an untouched pudding, sat Grandmamma. Laurence said grace without being invited, after standing up for a moment with an expression of pained interrogation. Edith accompanied his words by making with her forefinger and thumb a minute cruciform incision between two of the bones of her stays. . . . Harold flashed his spectacles upon every dish in turn. . . .

we are held — and especially by Harold. He is, perhaps, the most unpleasant little boy imaginable; but, at this safe distance, he is a joy. We cannot bear to part with him. When he is not there, like children at a pantomime, we long to know when he is coming on again, with his questions and his information and his spectacles, and his lantern that he loses control of, and flashes in the face of everybody.

Very different is Mr. Cannan's little book with the big name. Could it be called 'serious' even by his most patient admirers? Yet we dare to say it would be hard to find a book more wanting in a sense of humour. The hero is 'as usual.' He is Mr. Cannan's same young man, who is on the point of saving England, of bringing back the times of Shakespeare and Fielding, of killing off the old and giving the young the government of everything and the run of the Italian restaurants in Soho. Like his twin brother in 'Pink Roses,' this new hero avoids the war, but his reasons are more fully given. He is saving himself; he is waiting for his soul to burn its way out 'in a clear flame that will not be denied,' when he will, as his friend tells him, 'turn the stream of life back

into its course.' This young man's particular time of waiting is passed between what we might call a looking-glass parade, a love affair, and conversations with a Russian.

It is a habit with dentists who wish to put young patients at their ease to say to them, as they 'open wide,' 'I can see what you have had for your breakfast.' There is nothing in 'Time and Eternity' to prevent Mr. Cannan's public from making the same remark once again.

(*October 17, 1919.*)

A PLEA FOR LESS ENTERTAINMENT

The Young Physician . . . . By F. Brett Young

How do you write your novels? It is a question we are often on the point of putting to novelists, and then we remember that it is the question above all others that authors dislike answering. Why is this? They look into the void, they are, beyond words, vague. Would they have us believe that their books spring, fully bound, out of their heads, or that they are visited by angels? Yet we live in an age of experiment, when the next novel may be unlike any novel that has been published before; when writers are seeking after new forms in which to express something more subtle, more complex, 'nearer' the truth; when a few of them feel that perhaps after all prose is an almost undiscovered medium and that there are extraordinary, thrilling possibilities. . . .

Never was there a moment when the question was more fascinating. How do you write your novels? Do you have a definite plan before you begin? Do you know exactly what is going to happen and would it be possible for anything else to happen instead? And do you think a plot is necessary? And do you really write all you know, or do you still hold back a little, just a little . . . and why?

It is that last question that we should like, with all respect, to put to Mr. Young. His new novel 'The Young Physician' is the life history of Edwin Ingelby from the age of about fifteen until he is 'grown up.' The early part is yet another description of life at a public school — the miserable arrival of the new boy, interview with the miserly, cynical Head, ragging in the 'dorm.' at night, secret biscuit eating, cricket matches, 'footer,' 'meaty bits' out of the Bible, discussion of the facts of life, discovery of impurity among the boys, and the whole school assembled before the irate Head — we know, we dreadfully know it all. Nor does the 'spirit' of Mr. Young's account differ from the 'spirit' of all those other accounts.

> The next week was the most sensational that had ever shaken the placid life of St. Luke's. The fall of Griffin was no startling matter — deliberately he had been asking for it and the escapade of the fair in race week was no more than a crowning glory. Still it was an impressive affair. Immediately after breakfast . . . it was whispered that Griffin had been sent to the infectious ward of the sanatorium, which was always devoted, by reason of its size, rather than any conscious attempt at symbolism, to the isolation of moral leprosy. . . .

Here is the peculiar note of enthusiasm — the 'Boy's Own' note with which we have become so familiar. Nevertheless St. Luke's is not all the world to Edwin; he arrives loving his mother, and his love for her, instead of changing as a normal boy's should into a love of cricket bats and 'strawberry specials,' grows and deepens into a childish adoration.

In his account of the relations between these two Mr. Young carries us far away from the public school world. Edwin at school, in spite of his love of literature, his passion for historical dreaming and the fact that he cares more for poetry than games, is no more individual than those other school heroes. He follows

in their steps, indeed, is bullied like them, comes to his own like them, and is in and out of favour with now the masters, now the boys. But at home, we begin to see an extremely sensitive, loving, imaginative little boy. His mother is a little delicate creature living on dreams and the love of flowers and music, but she feels her hold on life is frail, and unconsciously, imagining that she is the protecting one, she turns to her only child to save her. No child should be made to bear the subtle, difficult, derided emotions of pitying love.

'Oh, Mother, why can't I carry you?' he cries. He does carry her and she clings, telling him of her dreams and of how unhappy she has been and how he is her baby.

Then, with her death and burial, the chapters telling of their love seem to fall away as the school chapters did. They break, like the two halves of a bud and are shrivelled and forgotten before the open flower. What was the need of them? Have they helped us in the least to understand the boy who goes home to find his perfect little mother dying? No. Reading these chapters, we know all that has gone before; this Edwin is not different from the Edwin with his first tuck box, he is the same, but realized, seen, felt and given. It is at this moment that he comes to life, and it is not without a thrill of excitement that we read on. But with the very first words of the new chapter the thrill subsides:

> From this emotional maelstrom the current of Edwin's life flowed into a strange peace.

'Emotional maelstrom'—this is very cold water indeed for an author to fling at his little hero, and it does not take us long to discover that however refreshed he may be he is again, in the reader's eye, a trifle blurred. And though, in the latter half of the book, when he is studying to be a doctor, there are occasional, brilliant glimpses of that beautifully realized little boy, they are

never prolonged and they are always followed by a fresh douche. Each time that Edwin feels deeply and is overcome, as youth is overcome, by the unimaginable mystery of life, the author, instead of telling us all he knows (and we feel that he does know), still holds back, or excuses, the emotional maelstrom. Added to this, he has a way of interrupting our vision of his hero by causing other characters to cross his path. We are not referring of course to those with whom he comes into real contact, to those who have something to give him that increases his knowledge of life, but to others — why are they there? — who pass in front of the camera, as it were, for the sake of passing. And finally there is his love affair with a frail delicate girl who awakens that tender protective love in him that he felt for his mother. Like his mother ' she is little and perfect and beautiful ' and he must defend her, he must carry her away out of the ugly world. Almost, that early glow returns, but this time the douche is heavy and final. His love ends in a fight with an old enemy of his schooldays whom he knows to be diseased and whom he tracks down into Rosie's bedroom. And Mr. Young leaves him, having signed on as ship's doctor, facing the open seas. . . .

Readable, yes, eminently readable — readable to a fault. If only Mr. Young could forget the impatient public and let himself be carried away into places where he thinks they do not care to follow!

(*October 24, 1919.*)

A STANDSTILL

Saint's Progress . . . . . By John Galsworthy

So there is a ' new school ' of fiction after all! We had come to believe that the phrase ' to belong to the new school ' had entirely lost its face-meaning, and was nothing but a despairing, lift-of-

the-eyebrow joke between the critic and his public, a 'Heaven knows what the young man or the young woman is driving at, I certainly don't, and I defy you to.' But no. These wandering students have their roof-tree and their bell. They are a definite body enough for Mr. John Galsworthy to delay his easy progress in the well-sprung carriage on what we might call the early afternoon of his journey, for as long as it takes him to give them a good beating.

But while we are all gratitude to Mr. Galsworthy for putting us out of our doubts by conducting us to the positively resounding portals, we cannot help feeling it is over-severe on his part so to thrust the whole school under the stick. . . .

> When once in a while some literary work of the new school came their way, with its self-conscious exhortations to complete self-consciousness, its doctrine of pure and utter selfishness, or of a hopelessly self-conscious unselfishness, with the querulous and thin-blooded passionateness of its young heroes and heroines, bent on nothing but realizing their unrealizable self through a sort of brain-spun arrogance and sexuality.

Even when we take into account the lively sense of responsibility which a famous and elder author must feel towards the new generation, these are formidable blows, and we are at a loss to call to mind the names of those works, numerous and noteworthy enough to form a new school, which have provoked them. It is certain, however, that Mr. Galsworthy would not have adopted these Draconian methods were he not confident that nothing less would answer. Alas! then, it would seem that we have discovered the new school only to cry 'Hail and farewell' to it — only to turn aside, with a shudder, to the old school for our consolation and reward.

The hero of Mr. Galsworthy's new novel is a clergyman, the

Rev. Edward Pierson. Let us imagine him seated at his little piano, for his life is divided between love of music and religion. On either side of him stands a daughter. Gratian, the elder, turns from her father to a dark, downright, shrewd doctor of a husband with a passion for argument; Nollie, aged eighteen, leans over a peramublator containing a war-baby — her left hand, shamelessly and proudly uncovered, wears no ring. A dark, lean, travelled Englishman, with a game leg (caused by the war), looks towards Nollie and longs, but there is a woman between them, bent on distracting his attention. Leila (Delilah, as Nollie calls her), in a black silk gown such as Malay women wear, holds up her white arms and presses a gardenia against Jimmy Fort's mouth. She is forty-four, with touched-up hair, and reddened lips, and she is making her last bid for love. Then we have a couple, Aunt Thirza and Uncle Bob — Aunt Thirza in a lilac-coloured gown,

> like a painting of 'Goodness' by an old master, restored by Kate Greenaway. . . . Her inexpugnable tranquillity, unsentimental tenderness, matter-of-fact busyness, together with the dew in her eyes, had been proof against twenty-three years of life on a tea plantation. . . .

— Uncle Bob, who

> grew like a cork tree, and acted like a sturdy and well-natured dog. His griefs, angers and enjoyments were simple as a child's, or as his somewhat noisy slumbers. They were a notably well-suited couple.

Further off there stands a Belgian refugee, a painter, in a broad-brimmed slouch hat and 'a black stock and seemingly no collar.' He, too, gazes admiringly and sadly at Nollie. Then, compassing them all about, there is

a ghastly company of faces; faces he had thought friendly, of good men and women whom he knew, yet at that moment did not know, all gathered round Noel with fingers pointing at her.

They are Edward Pierson's parishioners. Two more figures and the stage is complete. Upon a back cloth, leading his men, the boy-father of the war-baby spins round, shot through and through; and up in the air, fifteen years away, there floats the sweet vision of Edward Pierson's dead wife. He and not his daughter is the central figure of the book, the 'saint' whose pitiful progress Mr. Galsworthy traces. Sincere, sensitive, wistful, dreamy, emotional, we meet him first at Bob and Thirza's country house, where he is enjoying a well-earned holiday. Nollie is there, too, and 'a handsome boy with a little golden down on the upper lip of his sunny, red-cheeked face.' Even then, when her innocence is little short of prodigious, when she might almost be eighteen months old rather than eighteen years —

'Daddy, your nose is burnt!'

'My dear, I know.'

'I can give you some white stuff for it. You have to sleep with it on all night. Uncle and Auntie both use it.'

'Nollie!'

'Well, Eve says so . . .'

— he is distressed for her; he feels she has become 'a great responsibility' and sighs that his dear wife is not there to help him. Judge then how his distress passes to dismay when she tells him she 'can't afford to wait, she "must" marry the young man.' He has barely signified his disapproval when the elder daughter Gratian telegraphs him to come to her; her husband is desperately ill. He arrives home, and immediately his daughter informs him, in the room where her husband lies between life and death, that she no longer believes in immortality, no longer believes in God.

This is a frightful blow to him. Three days later, the husband, out of danger, challenges him 'to show me where there's any sign of altruistic pity, except in man,' and, after a most painful fight,

> . . . going to the little piano in the corner, he opened it, and began playing the hymn. He played it softly on the shabby keys of his thirty-year-old friend, which had been with him since college days, and sang it softly in his worn voice. . . .

On page 19, when Edward Pierson is still in the country, Mr. Galsworthy describes his visit to a church — how

> it was so long since he had been preached to, so long since he had had a rest! The words came forth, dropped on his forehead, penetrated, met something which absorbed them, and disappeared.

At the time, these words seemed to us remarkable in themselves, but a closer acquaintance with the padre's life immeasurably heightens their significance. Those words dropping, penetrating, being absorbed, disappearing — must have been a rare treat to him. For it seems that never again throughout the book do they do aught but wound him, stab him, perplex him, or grievously upset and bewilder him, and never again is he preached to; it is he only who does the preaching. Always on the threshold of his lips there trembles a 'Let us pray.' What was his life indeed but one long shower of arrows, into which he stepped, bravely, but with ever the wistful thought: 'Ah, if only I had my dear wife with me now!' Indeed, if he were not so tragic we would say he is like a man who has lost a beloved umbrella fifteen years ago and counts it sin to buy another.

But with Noel's baby the air becomes too thick. He feels it his duty to have the perambulator in his hall, but the parishioners will not bear it. And he is forced to resign.

The saint's progress is over. We see the stage slowly darken.

All the other actors are gone. The temptress has returned to South Africa; Gratian and her husband, happy undisturbed pragmatists, are at work to improve this world. Nollie, even though she has, as her family so gracefully put it, 'burnt her wing,' is married to Jimmy Fort; Uncle Bob and Aunt Thirza are — but why need we go any further? The stage is empty. The stage — the stage . . . the actors are gone. . . .

(*October 31, 1919.*)

THREE APPROACHES

The Great House . . . . . By Stanley Weyman
The Splendid Fairing . . . . By Constance Holme
Richard Kurt . . . . . By Stephen Hudson

The citizens of Reality are 'tied to town' and very content to be so tied, very thankful to look out of window on to a good substantial wall, plastered over with useful facts and topped with a generous sprinkle of broken bottle glass. Nevertheless, they are for ever sighing to travel. Not that they are prepared for long and difficult journeys. On the contrary. What they cannot have enough of is the small excursion, the timid flight just half-way to somewhere, just so far that Reality and its wall is out of sight while they picnic in the unfamiliar landscape, which distracts, but does not disturb.

A glance at the inside title-page of Mr. Stanley Weyman's new novel tells us that he has provided many such a *festa,* and another at the list of chapter headings assures us how expert he has become at his particular form of entertainment. The chapter headings are curiously revealing; they are like a list of stations on a particular railway line from which we learn the kind of country the train passes through, as well as its starting point and its destination: The Hotel Lambert — Homeward Bound — The Gate-

house — The Yew Walk — The Great House at Beaudelays — My Lord Speaks — Mary is Lonely — Missing — A Footstep in the Hall — Mary makes a Discovery — My Lord Speaks Out — A Turn of the Wheel — 'Let us make others thankful.' Here is the little touch of historical France of which the author is so fond, then the lonely heroine brought to England by her kinsman, Lord Audley, to the house of his cousin and his enemy. Why his enemy? His cousin lays claim to the title. If a certain Bible could be found and certain papers. . . . My Lord is fair without and false within. He woos and wins Mary by his masterfulness. The cousin is old and wicked, dying of heart disease and revenge; his faithful servant listens at keyholes and behind bushes. And there is another, a good silent man who sees it all and says nothing — but acts. The will is found, the cousin dies, Mary breaks off her engagement and re-engages herself to the silent one, and burns the will into the bargain. If wills are as agile as novelists and playwrights would have us believe, it is no wonder they provide an inexhaustible subject. . . . According to them, the soul no sooner flies from the body than the will takes parchment wings unto itself and flies also — up the chimney, down into the cellar, or behind the portrait with the piercing eyes.

Miss Constance Holme makes her appeal to a very different public. Whereas Mr. Weyman impresses us as an author who is as conscious of his audience as is a producer of plays — he has his eye upon it all the time, heightening an effect here, keeping this back, putting in a pair of branched candlesticks or the muffled tramp of many feet for its delight, never for his — we are certain Miss Holme would go on writing if every publisher in England (which Heaven forbid) forsook his calling and ran away to sea. We have not seldom remarked the curious naïve pleasure that many women take in writing for writing's sake. The mind pictures them half wonder, half joy, to find that they can put these lovely tender-coloured words together — can string these exquisite

sentences out of a morning's ramble in the garden or the meadow or gathering cold seashells. . . . But it is a dangerous delight, for what so often happens is that they are quite carried away, forgetting all about the pattern they intended to follow or embroidering it so thickly that none but themselves can discover its original outline.

Something of this fate has overtaken 'The Splendid Fairing.' The pattern is yet another peasant drama, 'Perhaps it never would have happened but for the day,' says the authoress, and she goes on to describe the kind of day that would have put it out of the question, and finally the day that brought it to pass.

> . . . Everywhere . . . there was mist—that strange, wandering thinking mist that seems to have nothing to do with either earth or air; and when the slow dark drew back there would be mist everywhere again.

So thick are its dropping veils that Miss Holme's novel is at times completely hidden; is, as it were, frayed away, spun away in a delicate white woolliness. She has her story to tell of a little feud between two families. Each family has a son, like each other as two peas, and they run away to Canada. When one comes back his half-blind mother takes him for the other, and to revenge her life-long hatred sends him out at night to what she knows is his certain death by 'the white tide horses.' It is an improbable story at best, and Miss Holme's attention is well-nigh persistently divided between the telling of it and all the wavy shapes and shadows, the gull, the heron, and the marsh, that she finds irresistible, until at last she would seem to believe that the attention of the peasant is equally divided, and that he, too, hears 'the messenger from the deep, sweeping its garment over the head of the crouched waste as it sped to deliver its challenge at the locked gate of the sea wall.' But this is a little pit lying at the feet of all who write about peasants. . . .

The attitude of the author of 'Richard Kurt' to his audience is a far more complex affair. Reading the first chapter we were under the impression that this was a sequel to a former novel in which Richard's childhood, marriage, and life had been described, with such a wave of the hand were these events mentioned and dismissed. Then on page 3 there occurred an extraordinarily minute description of Richard's father: 'He wore a short, square-cut beard which, originally red, had turned gradually, with years, to a golden-grey. The hair, though thinned, was yet uncommonly plentiful for a man approaching sixty, and curled away from its central parting in large, crisp, grey-brown waves above a forehead unusually high and broad and white. The eyes, nearly always averted save for swift glances, were dark and small and very piercing. . . .' and so on, down to 'the hand . . . slender and symmetrical, with long fingers . . . covered with red hair.' The whole tone of that is of an introduction; it reads indeed like the beginning of a first novel; there is a kind of over-eagerness to make Mr. Kurt vivid in the abundant use of the adjectives. This tone is more or less maintained until, with the second chapter, we find ourselves — certainly not introduced to — but asked to accept most fully and freely — the fact of Elinor.

It happens sometimes, perhaps, that sitting in a railway carriage at night, or sleeping in a steamer cabin, we overhear a long conversation about a third, and the conversation is punctuated with: 'Well, you know what she is like' or 'You can imagine what she said to that' — and we find ourselves, nodding and smiling and shaking our head — we can indeed! Thus it is that Mr. Stephen Hudson conveys this brilliant and horrible little personality to us — as though he were talking to someone who knew all about her from the beginning — and we, his readers, are overhearing what they have to say. Gradually we learn that she is dark and slender, with tiny feet and long eyelashes; that she loves to dress in pale blue; that she has a passion for minute dogs. This is the

outward Elinor. But her temper, her jealousy, her boundless vanity and extravagance — this is Elinor as we know her after we have listened. There is no plot to the novel; it is an account of how Richard Kurt wasted, idled through several years of his life, now happily and now unhappily. He is never more than a shadow; but first Elinor and then Virginia, the second woman of the book, are amazingly real.

(*November 7, 1919.*)

A 'REAL' BOOK AND AN UNREAL ONE

If All these Young Men . . . . By Romer Wilson
Living Alone . . . . . By Stella Benson

Whereas Miss Stella Benson declares that hers is not a real book — it does not deal with real people nor should it be read by them — we feel that Miss Romer Wilson would say the exact opposite of her novel, 'If All these Young Men.' Both are about the war. We suppose it will be long and long before the novelist, looking about him for a little wood wherewith to light his fire, does not turn instinctively to that immense beach strewn with wreckage. But Miss Stella Benson gives us the impression of having found herself there by chance, and being there she has picked up her charming broomstick, Harold; while Miss Romer Wilson, unable to keep away, has discovered a magnifying glass which, while enlarging her characters to a great deal more than life size, has a trick of making them appear incredibly small.

Miss Wilson's theme is the effect the war has upon the minds and hearts of a number of highly modern young persons living in England during the terribly critical months of 1918. There is no plot, but there is a principal character, Josephine Miller, the 'star' of the company, who, at a word from here, a wave from

there, and a glance at the scenery, gathers the scattered emotions of the moment into her bosom and pours them forth in song. If the reader can accept Josephine, can believe in her equipment of thoughts, feelings, emotions and dreams — the rest is easy. Then, everybody else and everything will doubtless appear quite possible, quite probable. He will have accepted, as it were, the magnifying glass, and such phrases as 'butterflies of waste paper fluttered in the streets,' 'the lanes were full of lovers as they could hold,' 'the green ribbon of intellectual intolerance,' will not shake him. Let us put this faith to the test a moment. Josephine is discovered walking up and down her small white room brooding over the war, the tide of battle, the continuity of resistance, the danger to England, annihilation and . . . so on.

> Suddenly darkness clapped down over everything, and receding an immeasurable distance into space she saw the blaze of war smoulder upon the earth's surface like soot sparks in a chimney grate, and then go out. Instantaneously she passed through a sensation of the paradox of human greatness, and found herself again in her own home, returned to her common senses. . . .

One might imagine that this last experience, which might be compared to a mental conflict with the old woman of the bathing machine, would be enough to give any young woman pause. But it is nothing to Josephine; it is a commonplace, little eleven o'clock in the morning experience, a mean little flight — *passons!* In a moment she is higher, deeper, further — until it is time to go out to lunch. Or, let us watch her for one moment returning from the office, passing between the people 'like God in Hades.'

> 'If I could only fight,' and her spirit flew up. She heard the bayonet go in; phantasmagorically she enacted the utmost brutalities of war, then phantasmagorically she went through

> the pantomime of conversion to human sanity. Finally, she emerged cleansed, and reinstated herself in the dull monotony of endurance. . . .

We are not given to understand that the young woman is in any degree remarkable. She is typical of her generation — the voice crying for many. True, her friends dislike her at times because she will insist on talking about the war, but that is only because her greater honesty and truthfulness puts them to shame. She belongs to a set — ' detestable intellectual snobs ' she calls them in a moment of pessimism — whose lives are spent in and out of each other's houses, in and out of Soho restaurants, in and out of the country, the opera, the craze of the hour, love. Through her magnifying glass the author sees them as creatures full of the finest feelings, who are prevented from contributing to the gaiety and the beauty of life by a monster which, just when the fun is fastest, sets up an ugly roar. Why should they be plagued with it? What have they done to deserve it? It is so out of the picture — so terribly, terribly remote from what she calls ' Sohoism,' and cherry and gold coloured chairs on a shining black floor, and spring pictures. Josephine Miller could dream perfectly well without its aid. Lying in bed

> she found herself in Europe and saw all its small life at a glance, enacted simultaneously, in the colour and detail of its times and the emotions of its tendencies. . . . All Rome fell out of Heaven rich with the noonday rape of Sabine wives. . . .

Does this mean anything? Breathes there the reader who is at home in this country of the mind? Who can believe in the suffering and the potential greatness of little people whose distaste for life was typified ' in the recurring demands of the toilet ' ? Here the magnifying glass has turned diminishing glass with a venge-

ance, and though Miss Romer Wilson may move a mountain she cannot reconcile us to these two equally distorted visions.

The heroine of Miss Stella Benson's novel is as subject to flights as Josephine, but she has her justification. She is a witch. She has also her broomstick, Harold, a very faithful, helpful creature. 'Witches,' according to Miss Benson, 'are people who are born for the first time. . . . Remembering nothing, they know nothing and are not bored. . . . Magic people . . . are never subtle, and though they are new they are never Modern.' Their common behaviour is, in fact, like that of people who are in love for the first time and for ever.

This little alien book describes the adventures of Angela and the adventures of those with whom she comes in contact while she is caretaker of a small general shop which is also part convent and monastery, part nursing home and college, and wholly a house for those who wish to live alone. She is an out-and-out, thorough witch, a trifle defiant, poor, always hungry, intolerant of cleverness and — radiant. It is her radiance above all which pervades everything, chasing over the pages like sunlight. For the minority who are magically inclined it is impossible to resist, and, since she has expressly told the real people that they are not invited to her party, what does it matter if they pass the lighted windows with a curl of the lip? We have said that 'Living Alone' is a book about the war. There is an Air Raid described, from below and from above, together with a frightful encounter which Harold has with a German broomstick, and one of the inmates of the house of Living Alone is Peony, a London girl who is drawing her weekly money as a soldier's wife — unmarried. The story that Peony tells her fellow-lodger Sarah Brown of how she found the everlasting boy is perhaps the high-water mark of Miss Benson's book. It is full of most exquisite feeling and tenderness. We hardly dare to use the thumb-marked phrase, a 'born writer'; but if it means anything Miss Stella Benson is one. She

seems to write without ease, without effort; she is like a child gathering flowers. And like a child, there are moments when she picks the flowers which are at hand just because they are so easy to gather, but which are not real flowers at all, and forgets to throw them away. This is a little pity, but exuberant fancy is rare, love of life is rare, and a writer who is not ashamed of happiness rarer than both.

(*November 14, 1919.*)

A SHIP COMES INTO THE HARBOUR

Night and Day . . . . . By Virginia Woolf

There is at the present day no form of writing which is more eagerly, more widely discussed than the novel. What is its fate to be? We are told on excellent authority that it is dying; and on equally good authority that only now it begins to live. Reviewers might almost be divided into two camps. Present each camp with the same book, and from one there comes a shout of praise, from the other a chorus of blame, each equally loud, determined and limited. One would imagine from a reading of the press notices that never in the history of the world was there such a generous distribution of the divine fire together with such an overwhelming display of ignorance, stupidity and dreariness. But in all this division and confusion it would seem that opinion is united in declaring this to be an age of experiment. If the novel dies it will be to give way to some new form of expression; if it lives it must accept the fact of a new world.

To us who love to linger down at the harbour, as it were, watching the new ships being builded, the old ones returning, and the many putting out to sea, comes the strange sight of ' Night and Day ' sailing into port serene and resolute on a deliberate wind. The strangeness lies in her aloofness, her air of quiet perfection,

her lack of any sign that she has made a perilous voyage — the absence of any scars. There she lies among the shipping — a tribute to civilization for our admiration and wonder.

It is impossible to refrain from comparing 'Night and Day' with the novels of Miss Austen. There are moments, indeed, when one is almost tempted to cry it Miss Austen up-to-date. It is extremely cultivated, distinguished and brilliant, but above all — deliberate. There is not a chapter where one is unconscious of the writer, of her personality, her point of view, and her control of the situation. We feel that nothing has been imposed on her: she has chosen her world, selected her principal characters with the nicest care, and having traced a circle round them so that they exist and are free within its confines, she has proceeded, with rare appreciativeness, to register her observations. The result is a very long novel, but we do not see how it could be otherwise. This leisurely progression is essential to its manner, nor could the reader, even if he would, drink such wine at a gulp. As in the case of Miss Austen's novels we fall under a little spell; it is as though, realizing our safety, we surrender ourselves to the author, confident that whatever she has to show us, and however strange it may appear, we shall not be frightened or shocked. Her creatures are, one might say, privileged; we can rely upon her fine mind to deliver them from danger, to temper the blow (if a blow must fall), and to see their way clear for them at the very last. It is the measure of Mrs. Woolf's power that her 'happy ending' could never be understood as a triumph of the heart over the mind. But whereas Miss Austen's spell is as strong upon us as ever when the novel is finished and laid by, Mrs. Woolf's loses something of its potency. What is it that carries us away? With Miss Austen, it is first her feeling for life, and then her feeling for writing; but with Mrs. Woolf these feelings are continually giving way the one to the other, so that the urgency of either is impaired. While we read we scarcely are aware which is uppermost; it is

only afterwards, and, specially, when recalling the minor characters, that we begin to doubt. Sally Seal of the Suffrage Society, Mr. Clacton with his French novel, old Joan in her shabby dress, Mrs. Denham peering among the cups and saucers: it is true that these characters are not in any high degree important — but how much life have they? We have the queer sensation that once the author's pen is removed from them they have neither speech nor motion, and are not to be revived again until she adds another stroke or two or writes another sentence underneath. Were they shadowy or vague this would be less apparent, but they are held within the circle of steady light in which the author bathes her world, and in their case the light seems to shine at them, but not through them.

'Night and Day' tells of Katharine Hilbery's attempt to reconcile the world of reality with what, for want of a better name, we call the dream world. She belongs to one of the most distinguished families in England. Her mother's father was that 'fairest flower that any family can boast' — a great poet. Katharine's father is an eminent man of letters, and she herself as an only child 'had some superior rank among all the cousins and connections.' Grave, beautiful, with a reputation for being eminently practical and sensible beyond her years, she keeps house for her parents in Chelsea, but this activity does not exhaust Katharine. She has her lonely life remote from the drawing-room in Cheyne Walk, and it is divided between dreams 'such as the taming of wild ponies on the American prairies, or the conduct of a vast ship in a hurricane round a promontory of rock,' and the study of mathematics. This last is her half-conscious but profound protest against the family tradition, against the making of phrases and (what Mrs. Woolf rather curiously calls) 'the confusion, agitation and vagueness of the finest prose.'

But it is only after she has contracted an engagement which is in every way highly suitable with William Rodney, a scholar

whose knowledge of Shakespeare, of Latin and Greek, is not to be disputed or denied, that she realizes in so doing she has in some mysterious way betrayed her dream world — the lover on the great horse riding by the seashore and the leaf-hung forests. Must life be for ever this lesser thing, this world as we know it, shapely, polished and secure? Katharine had no impulse to write poetry, yet it was the poet in her that made her see in Ralph Denham the man for whom she could feel that strange great passion which is like a fire lighting up the two worlds with the one exultant flame. . . .

It would be interesting to know how far Mrs. Woolf has intended to keep this dream world of Katharine's and of Ralph's a deep secret from her readers. We are told that it is there, and we believe it; yet would not our knowledge of these two be wonderfully increased if there were something more than these suggestions that are like delicate veils hiding the truth? . . .

As for the real world, the world of Mr. and Mrs. Hilbery, William Rodney, Cassandra Otway — there we appreciate to the full the author's exquisite generosity. It is so far away, so shut and sealed from us to-day. What could be more remote than the house at Cheyne Walk, standing up in the night, with its three long windows gilded with light, its drawn velvet curtains, and the knowledge that within a young creature is playing Mozart, Mrs. Hilbery is wishing there were more young men like Hamlet, and Katharine and Rodney are faced by the incredible sight of Denham, outside in the dark, walking up and down. . . .

We had thought that this world was vanished for ever, that it was impossible to find on the great ocean of literature a ship that was unaware of what has been happening. Yet here is 'Night and Day' fresh, new, and exquisite, a novel in the tradition of the English novel. In the midst of our admiration it makes us feel old and chill: we had never thought to look upon its like again!

(*November 21, 1919.*)

SOME ASPECTS OF DOSTOEVSKY

An Honest Thief: and Other Stories.
By Fyodor Dostoevsky
Translated from the Russian by Constance Garnett

If we view it from a certain angle, it is not at all impossible to see in Dostoevsky's influence upon the English intellectuals of to-day the bones of a marvellously typical Dostoevsky novel. Supposing we select London for his small provincial town and his arrival for the agitating occurrence — could he himself exaggerate the discussions he has provoked, the expenditure of enthusiasm and vituperation, the mental running to and fro, the parties that have been given in his honour, the added confusion of several young gentlemen-writers declaring (in strict confidence) that they were the real Dostoevsky, the fascinating arguments as to whether or no he is greater than Jane Austen (what would Jane Austen have said to the bugs and the onions and the living in corners?), the sight of our young egoists puffing up like undismayed frogs, and of our superior inner circle who are not unwilling to admit that he has a considerable amount of crude strength before returning to their eighteenth-century muttons?

Ohè Dostoevsky! Où est Dostoevsky?
As-tu vu Dostoevsky?

Few indeed have so much as caught a glimpse of him. What would be the end of such a novel? His disappearance without doubt, leaving no trace but a feeling of, on the whole, very lively relief. For if we do not take him superficially, there is nothing for us to do but to take him terribly seriously, but to consider whether it is possible for us to go on writing our novels as if he never had been. This is not only a bitterly uncomfortable prospect; it is positively dangerous; it might very well end in the majority

of our young writers finding themselves naked and shivering, without a book to clothe themselves in.

However, the danger is not a real one. There are signs that the fashion for him is on the wane. How otherwise can we interpret the avidity with which opinion seizes upon the less important, extravagant side of Dostoevsky, making much of it, making much of that and ignoring all else, than that it has had its fright, as it were, but now has been assured that the monster at the fair will not remain? But a remarkable feature of this parade of intellectual snobbishness, this laughing at the Russian giant, is that the writers appear to imagine that they laugh alone — that Dostoevsky had no idea of the exquisite humour of such a character as Stepan Trofimovitch, with his summer sickness, his breaking into French and his flight from civilization in a pair of top-boots, or that he regarded the super-absurdities of Prince K. as other than quite normal characteristics. It is true that especially in some of the short stories we may find his sense of humour terribly jars on us, but that is when the humour is ' false '; it is exasperation disguised, an overwhelming nostalgia and bitterness disguised or an attempt at a sense of fun, in which never was man more wanting. Then, again, to laugh with Dostoevsky is not always a comfortable exercise for one's pride. For he has the — surely unpardonable — habit of describing at length, minutely, the infinitely preposterous state of mind of some poor wretch, not as though he were ' showing us a star,' but with many a familiar nod and look in our direction, as much as to say: ' But you know yourself from your own experience what it is to feel *like this.*'

There is a story, ' An Unpleasant Predicament,' in this collection which is a terrible example of this. It relates how a young general, exasperated by an evening with two elder colleagues whom he suspects of treating him like a schoolboy and laughing at him because of his belief in the new ideas, in humanity and

sympathy with the working classes, yields to the temptation on the way home of putting himself to the test, of proving to his Amour Propre that he really is the fine fellow she thinks him to be. Why should he do anything so dangerous? He knows in his heart that he does not believe in any of these things, and yet isn't it possible for him to impose this idea of himself on anybody he chooses? And why should he not slay reality as an offering to his goddess? The revenge that reality takes upon Ivan Ilyitch Pralinsky is wild and violent and remote enough from our experience, and yet who can read it and not be overcome by the feeling that he understands only too well. . . .

Perhaps Dostoevsky more than any other writer sets up this mysterious relationship with the reader, this sense of *sharing*. We are never conscious that he is writing at us or for us. While we read, we are like children to whom one tells a tale; we seem in some strange way to half-know what is coming and yet we do not know; to have heard it all before, and yet our amazement is none the less, and when it is over, it has become ours. This is especially true of the Dostoevsky who passes so unremarked — the childlike, candid, simple Dostoevsky who wrote 'An Honest Thief' and 'The Peasant Marly' and 'The Dream of a Queer Fellow.' These three wonderful stories have all the same quality, a stillness, a quiet that takes the breath. What have they to do with our time? They are full of the tragic candour of love. There is only one other man who could have written the death of Emelyanouska, as described by the poor little tailor:

> I saw Emelyanouska wanted to tell me something: he was trying to sit up, trying to speak, and mumbling something. He flushed red all over suddenly, looked at me . . . then I saw him turn white again, whiter and whiter, and he seemed to sink away all in a minute. His head fell back, he drew one breath and gave up his soul to God.

(*November 28, 1919.*)

CONTROL AND ENTHUSIASM

True Love . . . . . By Allan Monkhouse
Children of No Man's Land . . . By G. B. Stern

Mr. Monkhouse is an author who drives a pen well under control. It is, we feel, a trained obedient pen, warranted neither to idle nor to run away, but to keep up a good round pace from the first moment of the journey until the last. While it has long since been broken of any inclination to shy at an occasional accidental object it is by no means wholly devoid of playfulness. This playfulness serves to illustrate how nice is the author's control in that he can afford not only to tolerate, but even to encourage it, while maintaining an easy equable measure. There is a moment when Geoffrey Arden, the hero, dismissing the reasons for his confidence in the success of his new play, exclaims to his sister, 'I'm a bit of a pro. at this game, Mary.' And that, with all respect to Mr. Monkhouse, is the abiding impression he leaves on us. He is a professional novelist, quietly confident, carefully ironical, and choosing always, at a crisis, to underrate the seriousness of the situation rather than to stress it unduly. Admirable as this temper undoubtedly is, it nevertheless leaves the reader a great deal cooler than he would wish. He is interested, stimulated, and even, towards the latter half of the book, moved, yet with what reservations! There is a title which the amateur novelist shares (but how differently!) with the true artist: it is that of experimentalist. However deep the knowledge a writer has of his characters, however finely he may convey that knowledge to us, it is only when he passes beyond it, when he begins to break new ground, to discover for himself, to experiment, that we are enthralled. The 'false' writer begins as an experimentalist; the true artist ends as one; but between these two there are a small number of writers of unquestionable honesty and sincerity who do not feel the

impulsion toward unknown issues. It follows that in novels of this kind there is room for most delicate distinctions, but high excitements are out of place; all is, as it were, at second-hand, and while we are not expected to share the experience with the author, he would seem, by the care he takes never to make an unguarded statement, to expect of us a kind of intellectual running commentary.

'True Love' is an extremely good example of this peculiar kind of novel. We are conscious throughout of the author's attitude, of his vein of irony which gives an edge to what might otherwise appear a trifle 'simple,' and of his generous appreciation of all the possibilities of a man like Arden. His scene is Manchester, its journalistic circles and its small theatrical world. The time is before the war and during it. Geoffrey Arden, a young man of thirty, on the staff of the *Herald,* is one of those divided souls whose mind is in literature (he is the author of several novels and two plays), but whose heart is in life. Neither satisfies him. When he gives way to one the other calls; when he answers the other, again he is beckoned away. He is like all men in such case, deeply interested in himself and in what is going to happen to him. But this interest is not in the least abnormal or morbid; it is the interest of the looker-on, almost one might say of the Geoffrey Arden that was to be, tolerant, amused and wise.

In the months before the war he comes to know and, slowly, to love, an actress who takes the principal part in his play. In her he sees perhaps the delicate spirit who will bring him into harmony with Life. But the war breaks out, and when he asks her to marry him she tells him she is a German.

'German father, German mother. Born in Germany.'

'I love you.'

'Your impulses are beautiful, and yet you're thinking all the time.'

And she was right. If his heart triumphed it was for the briefest instant. And then his mind is attacked by the most curious mixture of doubt, suspicion and criticism. Here is the old battle again in a new guise, and perhaps his heart would have lost if Sybil Drew had allowed him to fight it alone. She loves him; she cannot let him go, and cleverly in her desperation she makes her appeal to his heart through his mind, with her 'wonderful idea.'

> 'Listen! It's this. We cannot agree. We must not agree. . . . You shall be English. And I am partly English too. But I am German. Listen with sympathy. You shall champion your nation, I mine. We must be generous with one another and help one another. . . . That means that you must help me. . . . You must think of things that I ought to say. . . . Cannot we be chivalrous enemies and lovers too?'

This, then, is the task they set themselves — to love and to be loyal. But Geoffrey goes to the war and is killed while they are still trying, and she, left in England, dies in childbed, hunted to death by the anti-Germans. There is nothing left of them but — two men talking their tragedy over in a teashop. . . . Would their lives have been splendid? Would Arden have found his abiding place in the heart of Sybil? We are left uncertain, but Mr. Monkhouse, in choosing so brave a title for his book, would seem to believe that all would have been well; it rings like his *profession de foi.*

It would be hard to find a style more unlike that so consciously practised by Mr. Monkhouse, than that (shall we say?) so recklessly enjoyed by the author of 'Children of No Man's Land.' Miss Stern flings her net wide; she brings it in teeming, and which are the important fish, which are to be thrown back into the sea, if those funny monsters are fish at all, or alive, or good for anything — it takes the reader a long book to discover. London is her ocean — Jewish London, Bohemian London, the

London of strange boarding-houses and strange foreigners. Her knowledge of it is almost mistifyingly complete, and it is poured out for us with a queer mixture of enthusiasm, love of human beings and cunning understanding of them. Her central figure, the solid little rock above and about which all this beats and froths and bubbles, is Richard Marcus, a typically English boy of German parents, who does not discover until the war that he is legally a German — a child of no man's land. It does not matter that he has spent all his life in England, that he hates the Germans, hates everything about them, and loves England and the English. He is not asked what his own feelings are, but a set of alien horrible false feelings are provided for him by those same English, and, far from letting him fight for them, they only wait until he is of age to send him to an internment camp. The story of this little fifteen-year-old boy's gradual coming to consciousness through this, of his struggle first to be allowed to be English, and then to escape from the English whom he loves, of his nightmare journey across no man's land with the English hunting him down, and then on the last day of his freedom, his eighteenth birthday, his strange revelation that nothing that man can do to you really matters . . . is the chief story of the book. All the others, intricate and many-coloured, and some of them bewildering in their strangeness, are variations upon the same theme. They seem to depart so far from the noble-childish simplicity of Richard that at times they are well-nigh lost. The character of Deborah, for instance (who is perhaps the most convincing 'modern' girl we have ever encountered in fiction or in life), becomes so involved and difficult that we are on the very point of thinking her gone when the theme of Richard returns, and she is explained and, as it were, made whole.

It is a strange world, a bewildering world, but there is no doubt that Miss Stern makes it absolutely convincing.

(*November 28, 1919.*)

A REVIVAL

Legend . . . . . By Clemence Dane

Were it not for the dates (October 1917–April 1919) printed on the last page of 'Legend' we should have been inclined to believe that Miss Clemence Dane had taken twenty years over the writing of her quaint old-fashioned little story. The spirit, the temper, the manner, all seem to belong to that curious little collection of novels and stories by women and — one really couldn't help fancying — for women that appeared about a score of years ago. In recalling them we are amazed to discover how similar they were. It was as though the writers shared a common spirit — the spirit of sex antagonism; a temper that was half extravagant cynicism, half extravagant sentimentality; and a manner, more often than not like that of dramatic reciters, which caused us to burn with embarrassment — as if we were overhearing something which we not only had no right to hear, but which it positively was not fair to listen to. . . . Their world was in very truth a woman's world. If it held a genius, the genius was a woman, so was the creature of strong personality, good or bad; and of men there existed, roughly, two types; one, the brute at the mercy of his sexual appetites, and the other, the big simple child unable to feed himself or clothe himself without a woman's aid.

To read 'Legend' is to become acutely conscious of the great gulf that separates us from this woman's world. It is an account of how a small set of literary people living in London who are met together for one of their monthly 'nights' are suddenly informed that the leading spirit of their group is dead — she has died in childbed. Thereupon Anita Serle, a great critic — 'the finest judge of style in England, so Jasper Flood says' — and the dead woman's most intimate friend, announces the fact that she is going to write a life — a Life of Madala Grey. All the facts are

hers, she is the keeper of Madala's manuscripts and letters, and all through their friendship she has 'Boswellized.' Now, she tells them, is her hour. This Life is to be her great achievement. Fame she has, respect she has, but all through the years the critics and the public alike have denied her the title of creator; but at last—

> 'I tell you I've got her, naked, pinned down, and now I shall make her again. Isn't it fair? She ought to thank me. "Dead," he says. Who's to blame. She chose to kill herself. What right had she to take risks? I—I've refrained, she couldn't. She threw away her lamp. But I—I take it. I light it again. Finding's keeping. It's mine.' Her voice ripped on the high note like a rag on a nail and she checked, panting. . . .

And so they sit through the November evening, Madala Grey's friends, discussing her life, her books, her career, and wondering how she could possibly have come to marry a commonplace country doctor who cared not a jot that everyone in England had read 'Eden Walls.' There is Jasper Flood, seated on the floor, a brilliant cynical ultra-modern poet, who tosses us airy trifles as 'Enlighten our darkness, dear Lady,' or 'Delightfullest, my thoughts are thistledown.' At one moment the tip of his red tongue showed; at another, when childbirth was mentioned, his gaze travels slowly over Anita. . . . He leans against the knees of a blond lady very much made up, wearing a white shawl creeping with dragons, whose chief perplexity is how Madala managed to describe passion as she did without experience. Her voice is a purr, 'Jasper,' and he leans against her, playing with her rings, her draperies brushing him intimately. On a 'pouf' sits the Baxter girl, reeking of scent; she is a protégée of Anita's but although she knows it is as much as your literary life is worth to admire 'sentiment,' she is still youthful enough to love Madala Grey apart from her books. Another lady, a gushing lady—'Damn husbands, damn publishers'—whose 'Sir Fortinbras'

America has just rejected, is divided between admiration and love. In the background is great-aunt Serle, the 'gaffer' of the piece, with a prophetic forefinger, a chuckle, the air of a wise bird, a ravel of knitting. At the crisis it is she who listens for the ghostly cab-wheels bearing the ghostly Madala — and hears them. Over by the window, his beautiful hands toying with the tassel of the blind, is a famous Royal Academy painter, Kent Rehan, who had loved Madala the woman. And in the shadows, Jennie Summers, the teller of the tale, a simple country girl who, bewildered and confused by these brilliant mechanical dolls, is hearing of Madala for the first time.

The high problem that vexes the group round the fire is how Madala Grey could have turned traitor to Art, could have thrown away her genius and delivered herself into the arms of a mere man. They cannot solve it, but Anita thinks she can explain. She has a letter, a passionate love letter written by Madala to 'someone.' This she thinks proves that Madala was on the point of eloping 'without benefit of clergy,' as she says, and that when the elopement fell through she fled to the other man for refuge. But the letter, which is to be the heart of the book, is seized by Kent Rehan, who takes it over to the fireplace, lifts a block of coal with naked hands, thrusts the paper down, and then, replacing the block of coal with naked hands, keeps it there till all is burned. This crisis is followed immediately by another in which the ghost of Madala appears to Rehan and Jennie.

> Her eyes as she listened to the group by the hearth were sparkling with amusement, and that tolerant deep affection that one keeps for certain dearest, foolish friends. . . .

And the story ends with the collapse of the artist and a small scene in which we are given to understand that he and Jennie are going to find happiness together.

If Jennie Summers, the simple country girl who tells the

tale, had never come to London, if she had gone on living in the tiny country place where they were 'too poor to afford Mudie's' and 'the vicar's wife sent mother the Royal Academy catalogue after she had been up to town,' it is extremely probable that this would be her idea of the way literary people in mysterious London lived and moved; nor would it seem strange to her that a great woman should feel for them 'that tolerant deep affection that one keeps for certain dearest, foolish friends.' But 'Legend' is not a dream of Jennie Summers. Miss Dane would have us believe that the characters are important, the problem is real. Not that she asks us to admire her precious little crew round the fire; her pen is acid as she describes Anita, Jasper and his blond lady of the dragons, Miss Howe swooping and kissing the Baxter girl with open incredulous mouth; but she does demand of us that we shall believe in them. That we cannot do. Did they even exist twenty years ago, outside those passionate pages — these writers who are for ever prating about the public, their duty to the public, what the public has the right to know, and who look upon themselves as creatures dedicate for whom the common loves of husband and children could not be? Did not Miss Dane say: 'This is what people think writers are like' — and so draw them, and 'This is what people think a genius is like'? For her Madala is most certainly the complete genius. Young, radiant, painted by Kent Rehan in a Liberty scarf with cowslips in her hands as 'The Spring Song,' she wrote her books on her own confession as the bird sings, as the wave breaks. 'One just sits down and imagines,' says she, and when after the publication of 'Eden Walls,' which is a superb realistic study of a prostitute, some unfortunate wrote to her, she was terribly distressed, because she had never thought of it being 'real'; it was just a story! Her second book, 'Ploughed Fields,' contained (her friends agreed) 'the strongest love scene of the decade,' but for her writing was just scribbling. Away from it she was absolutely

simple, childish, wanting to be loved for her self alone, talking of going 'for a wander,' explaining her interest in the friend of her childhood by 'he belongs in, you know.' And then she throws her great blazing gift away by falling in love with a man who quarrels with her for cutting a parcel string with his razors, and kisses her, while lifting her off his bicycle, in front of the kitchen windows. A genius — who could mistake her? — but a woman, too! Ay, there was the rub — there's what those hungry creatures round the fire whom she had been wont to feed with her sympathy, her genius, cannot understand; only Kent and Jennie and great-aunt Serle are capable of realizing that real love will not be denied.

But can we believe for one moment in this Royal Academy portrait of a genius? Is she not of a piece with the others? To our thinking the real problem of 'Legend' is why Miss Clemence Dane, turning aside from life, should have concentrated her remarkable powers upon revising, redressing, touching up, bringing up-to-date these puppets of a bygone fashion.

(*December 5, 1919.*)

A FOREIGN NOVEL

Old People and the Things that Pass.

By Louis Couperus

To those who have read 'Small Souls' it will not come as a surprise that 'Old People' is a study of a family. For one could not but feel after reading the former novel that the chief gift of the author must lie in his power of presenting a group of individuals each of whom, when seen apart, has a separate, different life, but all of whom when viewed together are found to be but the parts that go to make up one mysterious creature — the family. He proved indeed that small souls are not really capable

of a separate existence; they may rebel against the family, defy it, laugh at it, but they are bound to recognize at the last that they cannot run away without longing to run back and that any step taken without its knowledge and approval is a step in the air.

There is passion in 'Small Souls,' but the note is not deep or greatly troubled. It is full of gentle satire. Perhaps its quality is best expressed in the chapter where the little girl sits practising her scales, up and down, up and down the piano, always so carefully sounding the wrong note, on a windy morning. Her back is turned to the window. But outside everything is fresh and flying. Outside, in the sun and wind, life is on the wing, and inside there is the sound of doors shutting, the tinkle of the bell and the grown-up people walking up and down the stairs, talking as they go — and always very carefully sounding the wrong note. . . .

In 'Old People' we have again a family, clinging to its houses, visiting, immensely absorbed in its family affairs, a whole little world of its own — but there the resemblance ends. The family in 'Old People' is not united by small scandals, little jealousies, wars and spites; through it there flows, like a dark underground river, the memory of a crime. . . . Sixty years ago, on a pouring wet night in Java, the beautiful Ottilie Dercksz was discovered with Mr. Takma by her husband. The husband had a native knife; Ottilie managed to hold him while Takma got it from him. 'Give him a stab!' she cried. 'Better him than you!' When it was over, helped by a native, they carried the body out into the storm and flung it into a river. Nobody discovered their crime except the young doctor who signed the death certificate, and Ottilie bought his silence with her beauty. She was mad for love of Takma at the time. Now it is late autumn sixty years after. The beautiful Ottilie is ninety-three, Mr. Takma is eighty-nine and Doctor Roelofsz is eighty-three — and they are haunted. They have lived freely and fully; they have been

successful and important; each of them believes that the secret is safe. It is as though life has purposely waited until they are defenceless, powerless to resist or to seek forgetfulness. They are too old; it is time for them to die; they ought to be at rest, but like dreadfully tired children who are not allowed to go to bed, but must stay downstairs among the hateful, tormenting guests, these old, old people are kept out of their graves and forced to live over and over again that stormy night in Java in all its horror and detail. They are not right in thinking that the secret is kept. One of Ottilie's sons, who was with them at the time, woke up and, standing in his little nightshirt on the verandah, saw what was done; his foot slipped in something horrible; it was his father's blood. But he kept silence. Another son suspected, and a grandchild has a suspicion. Even all those of the family who do not know are tainted; they are marked by the crime, set apart by a dark stream of sensual blood which flows in their veins like the counterpart of that dark river, and will not let them be calm.

In the shadow, on a high chair like a throne, her small brittle body hidden in the folds of her cashmere gown, her fingers, transparent, wand-like in the black mittens, her face a white porcelain mask, sits the old, old woman. She spends her days receiving the visits of her children, her grandchildren, her great-grandchildren, her great-great-grandchildren — down to little two-weeks-old Netta: 'a bundle of white and a little pink patch for a face, and two little drops of turquoise eyes, with a moist little munching mouth.' To her they are all children passing and repassing before her weary old eyes, while all the time, over by the china cabinet, or near the door, or outside the window near the park railings, there is something white . . . mistily rising.

Mr. Takma comes every afternoon to sit with his old friend. He too is small and slender, but wonderfully keen for such an

old man, because he is always on his guard. His voice like a breeze, airy, light, rustling: 'I've no appetite, child, I've no appetite' is always the same. Only, sometimes in the middle of a conversation, his eyes grow glassy, his head falls and he drops asleep for a moment or two. 'Nobody sees the inward shock with which he wakes.' Very often when he is there old Doctor Roelofsz comes stumping up the stair on his stiff leg, his dropsical paunch hanging sideways, his bald pate with its fringe of 'moth-eaten hair' shining, and he limps into the room muttering his eternal: 'Well — well — well. Yes, yes. Well-well!'

These are the three ancient criminals, whom life will not let go. And while they wait and suffer there is a kind of terrible race going on between the desire of the children who know and who long for the old people to die before the secret is discovered, and the curiosity of those who do not know and who burn for the secret to be revealed before the old people die. Never once does the dark river burst above ground, but as the year deepens to winter it seems to grow loud and swollen and dreadful. Then quite suddenly, before the year is out, Mr. Takma dies, and the old doctor, and last of all the old woman — and the river subsides.

'Old People' is one of those rare novels which, we feel, enlarge our experience of life. We are richer not only for having studied the marvellously drawn portraits of the three aged beings, but because we have marked their behaviour as they played their parts against this great half-hoop of darkening sky. But it is only when we think over the various members of that strange family that we realize how great is our gain. New people have appeared in that other world of ours, which sometimes seems so much more real and satisfying than this one. That they have a life and being of their own we do not question; even that they 'go on' long after the book is finished — this

we can believe. What is it then that differentiates these living characters from the book-bound creatures of even our brilliant modern English writers? Is it not that the former are seen ever, and always in relation to life — not to a part of life, not to a set of society, but to the bounding horizon, life, and the latter are seen in relation to an intellectual idea of life? In this second case life is made to fit them; something is abstracted — something quite unessential — that they wouldn't in the least know what to do with . . . and they are set in motion. But life cannot be made to 'fit' anybody, and the novelist who makes the attempt will find himself cutting something that gets smaller and smaller, finer and finer, until he must begin cutting his characters next to fit the thing he has made.

It is only by accepting life as M. Couperus accepts it that the novelist is free — through his characters — to question it profoundly.

(*December 12, 1919.*)

A POST-WAR AND A VICTORIAN NOVEL

Cousin Philip . . . . By Mrs. Humphrey Ward
Benjy . . . . . By George Stevenson

Those gentle readers who fell some years ago under the fascinations of Delia Blanchflower, an ardent feminist, aged twenty-two, who was placed at her father's dying wish under the guardianship of a still youthful, courteous English gentleman of caressing manners, but stamped by a mysterious sorrow, will find a very similar thrill waiting for them to-day in the person of Helena Pitstone, heroine of 'Cousin Philip,' an ardent 'modern' aged nineteen, who was placed at her mother's dying wish under the guardianship of a still youthful, courteous English gentleman of caressing manners, but stamped by an even more

mysterious sorrow. In both cases the extremely beautiful young ladies resent bitterly this interference with their personal liberty and declare war against their guardians; both desire to be friendly with a gentleman who has been mixed up in an unpleasant divorce case, both reluctantly fall in love with the enemy, and both come to recognize the old, old charm of man's strength and woman's weakness. Delia, tripping on a flight of steps, falls and is caught by quick strong fingers; Helena, stepping out of a boat, falls and has the like experience.

But in order delightfully to confound those readers who have put white strings in their bonnets against a second, similar wedding, Mrs. Ward gives her new heroine to Another. We are not satisfied. Helena ought to have married Cousin Philip and filled his house with the clamour of innocent children. She ought to have removed the pucker from that distinguished brow, given him back his old enthusiasm for life, and perhaps even, by and by, persuaded him to take up his sketching again—but it was not to be. What was in Mark Winnington the gentle sorrow of seeing the girl to whom he was engaged pine away and die becomes in the case of Cousin Philip the agony of a wild Bohemian wife returning to die in the Vicarage at the very gates of his Park, leaving a mentally defective child of whose existence he had hitherto been unaware. And strangely, Mrs. Ward makes us feel that the larger tragedy is not of her choosing; it cuts across the flowing lines of her book, spoiling the pattern. How much more suitable if the wife were well and truly dead in a foreign town, and the little boy just pathetically lame enough to discover in the eyes of Helena the shadow of a brooding tenderness! But the war, widening our horizons, demands the wider view.

'Cousin Philip' is from first to last a post-war novel. As we have suggested, it is the story of a wild girl's taming. For from the moment of her entrance, complete even to khaki leggins,

driving the great Rolls-Royce and roundly scolding the discomfited chauffeur at her side, it is Helena alone who carries the book upon her radiant shoulders. She is, we are given most clearly to understand, the kind of girl that the war has produced and — what is to be done with her, in fine, now that the canteens are closed and there are no more wounded soldiers to fetch from the railway stations? Here is this dazzling, imperious creature, the living image of one of the Romney sketches of Lady Hamilton as a bacchante, talking slang with the ardour of a small boy after his first term at school, snubbing her elders, laying down the law, having as many 'boys' as she pleases, and demanding that she shall be told why a bad man is bad. What is to be done with Helena Pitstone, defying the world, crying that:

> The chauffeur here is a fractious idiot. He has done that Rolls-Royce car of Cousin Philip's balmy, and cut up quite rough when I told him about it?

No wonder Cousin Philip and the chaperone, 'a person of gentle manners and quiet antecedents,' whom he has chosen to help him, are martyrs to misgivings; no wonder Mrs. Ward cannot resist piling delicate agony upon delicate agony until we are brim full of anticipatory shudders. And then quite suddenly we are aware that the author is quietly laughing at her creation and our tremors. What is all this pother about? What is all this nonsense about freedom and life on one's own? There is the good old-fashioned remedy ready to hand that never fails, even in the most serious cases — marriage and children. It will be a supreme consolation for distracted parents to read that their young people are just like any other young people. True, they have been through a trying experience at a critical period, but there is no reason why it should have any lasting effect. Think once more to Delia Blanchflower and the dreadful part she

played in the Militant Suffrage Movement — and yet love won the day. Once they find the right man to look after them and are kept busy and out of mischief furnishing the little nest, modern women will be as safe as their grandmothers once they find the right partners. But suppose, we find ourselves asking as we lay the book aside, there should not be enough partners to go round? In the world of 'Cousin Philip' such questions are not asked, much less answered.

'We go not, but we are carried; as things that float; now gliding gently; now hulling violently; according as the water is either storm or calm.' These words, which Mr. Stevenson quotes as a heading to Part IV. of his 'Benjy,' might well be applied to the whole. In them is contained the spirit of the book — a something gentle that neither protests nor demands, but bows before the inevitable and is resigned. It is an account of the lives and fortunes of a country doctor and his family from the year 1859, when Johnnie marries his Priscilla, to 1914, when 'Benjy,' one of the younger children and now a middle-aged man, bids his favourite sister 'good-bye' the night he leaves for France. The author's demands upon us are very gentle. He invites the reader to accompany him to where the little spring first outgushes, to follow its course over difficult stony ground to where it flows wide and shallow through fields of childhood, on, ever-widening and deepening until it breaks into many tiny rivulets that lose one another, meet again, part, but never again mingle. A curious mixture of reminiscence and quiet speculation is characteristic of the author's style during his pious pilgrimage. He pauses, broods over this and that, reaches forward and looks backward, until we feel it would make little or no difference were we to read the book from the end to the beginning, rather than the common way. But this leisurely style has its special temptations. It affords the author far too many opportunities for poking sly fun at tiny incidents that

will not bear being thus isolated, for involving them in nets of fantastical words (in which they quite disappear from sight) until, carried away by the amusing exercise, he finds it very difficult to recapture the thread of his story.

But as long as the twelve little Ainsworth children are at home and running about in their father's fields and their mother's house, 'Benjy' is not without a certain charm. It is difficult to make the memories of an early childhood spent in a fine freedom from surveillance uninteresting. We like to hear about their special ways, to wander over the old-fashioned house, to be shown their secret haunts and to be told that the sheep were called Mrs. Flop, Mrs. Slop and Mrs. Nan. It is only when they grow older and come into touch with the world that Mr. Stevenson fails lamentably. The quaint, old-fashioned children are replaced by plain, strange young men and women, and the author in his effort to convince us of Benjy's purity of heart pours over him such a pale flood of sentimentality that he is drowned before our eyes.

(*December 19, 1919.*)

ALEXANDER KUPRIN

The Garnet Bracelet . . . By Alexander Kuprin

In his introduction to this volume of short stories Mr. Lyon Phelps, Professor of English Literature at Yale University, has seized the opportunity to inform, caution, and put 'right' American opinion upon the whole subject of Russian Literature. His manner in so doing is unfamiliar to English readers. It makes us feel that while we read we are, like Alice, dwindling away in height; by the end of the first page we are much too young even to attend a University; by the end of the second, and especially when that tiny little joke is popped into our

baby mouths, we are of a size to spell out maxims at a learned knee:

> A novel is not great simply because it is written in the Russian language, nor because its author has a name difficult to pronounce.

Or:

> A slavish — no pun intended — adoration of Russian novels is not itself an indication of critical intelligence.

Or:

> A pessimist is not necessarily a profound thinker, nor is uncleanness in itself a sign of virility.

But surely Mr. Phelps exaggerates the extreme innocence of American literary opinion; he must surely be mistaken in not realizing that it has long cut down these modest flowers of thought with its little hatchet. Nevertheless even Kuprin is described in terms that remind us of those infantile dogmatics about the cat and the mat, and 'run, fox, run': 'He soars and he sinks. . . . He is holy and he is coarse; he is sublime and he is flat.'

Between this introduction and the preface contributed by the translator, Mr. Pasvolsky, who is at naïve pains to inform us when Kuprin is at his best, and why he is at his best, the author makes a difficult bow. But happily the first story, which gives the title to the book, is wonderfully successful, and so the bow is a triumphant one. 'The Garnet Bracelet' is a story of hopeless love. It tells how a poor official fell in love with the beautiful Princess Vera Nicolaeyna. For seven years he wrote to her, and then on her birthday he sent her the bracelet. At this her husband and brother interfered. They sought the man out, and he, after giving them to understand that he fully realized

the impossibility of the situation, promised them to disappear. Next day the Princess read of his suicide. She received from him a letter written just before he had shot himself, expressing his happiness in having loved her, and begging her to ask someone to play for her, in his memory, the Largo Appassionata from Sonata 2, Op. 2, of Beethoven. From this old-fashioned plot, old-fashioned like the poor bracelet with its ill-polished stones, its green stone in the middle with the five deep red ones surrounding, there come rays of deep quivering light, and all that they reveal is linked together just for one moment, becomes part of the tragic life-story of the strangely simple man for whom 'to love was enough.' 'May nothing transient or vain trouble your beautiful soul!' he writes. But the life of the Princess is composed of what is transient and vain; the society in which she lives is transient and vain; real love could have no part in it. But being a woman her secret dream is of a love that shall fill her whole life; it has come near her, and now it is gone for ever.

The other stories in the book do not approach the first. 'Horse Thieves' and 'The Jewess' are, we imagine, written under the influence of Tchehov. The first, which is an account of a little boy's association with beggars and thieves, and contains a hideous picture of mob violence, has many a touch which puts us in mind of the great writer, but only to marvel, before Kuprin's heaviness, at the delicacy and surety of the other. In 'The Jewess,' again, it is easy to see in what soil the idea has been nourished. But a sorry weed has grown, coarse, straggling, with no flower at all for all the author's urging, until at last he has propped it up with an old stick of allegory which never for an instant deceives us.

A word must be said about 'An Evening Guest.' In a letter giving a list of the works he considers his most successful the author places it first. This is very interesting, as showing the

extraordinary difference between the Russian consciousness and ours. To us "The Evening Guest' is quite impossible; it is very nearly absurd in its ingenuousness. One evening somebody knocks at the writer's door. It sets him wondering who is there, who might be there, and how unknown is the future. He compares life at great length to a game of cards, and then imagines that some madman should hit upon the idea of a lottery of life. On an appointed day there would stand an urn filled with cards, one of which we must draw. And then what is life except this drawing of lots out of an urn of fate? And so on until he falls to wondering whether he will be able to make certain sounds to which the other person on the other side of the door will respond. Until finally, when we are almost inclined to call it childish, he cries, 'Every time that I think of the vastness, complexity, darkness, and elemental accidentality of this general intertwining of lives, my own life appears to me like a tiny speck of dust tossed in the fury of a tempest.' What more is to be said?

(*December 26, 1919.*)

THE PLAIN AND THE ADORNED

The Outlaw . . . . . By Maurice Hewlett
Evander . . . . . By Eden Phillpotts

'The Outlaw' is the fifth volume of Mr. Hewlett's 'Sagas Retold.' It is the story of how one Gisli, a quiet, peace-loving man, was forced for honour's sake to take part in quarrels that were not his, to fight other people's battles, and to waste all the strength and resourcefulness of his manhood in escaping from his enemies. For a long time he is successful, but there is one foe — and that is a spear called Grayflanks — from whom there is no hiding, and he comes to a tragic end. This spear had

been fashioned out of a sword that was taken away from its lawful owner and used against him, and so there was a curse upon it.

Perhaps, according to Norse ideas, it was not enough that a man should live snugly and peacefully as Gisli desired to do with his wife Aud. And yet he was by no means an idle man. Even in his very young days he was 'forever at work, building, smithing, quarrying, timber-felling.' When Norway got too hot to hold his family he made a great ship and took them to Iceland, and, once there, he it was who built a fine roomy house for them all. We should have supposed that there was place and to spare for such a man in a world of fighters, but he made the fatal mistake of asking no credit for what he did, and 'as for his temper — it was perfect.' It was, doubtless, this last characteristic that egged them on against him, for a perfect temper is as aggravating to witness as a fire that burns brisk and quiet, never needing the bellows or the poker, never roaring away and setting us at defiance or — reduced to a melancholy flutter — imploring our aid.

In reconstructing the ancient story Mr. Hewlett has chosen to couch it in a style of great simplicity. He explains in a prefatory note that his version is based on a literal translation published in 1869 and a dramatic version published some thirty years later. 'I have added nothing to the substance, and have left out many of the accidents, including (without exception) all the bad verses.' We cannot help wishing that he had been a great deal more lenient with himself — that he had added materially to the substance and included a number of good verses. For the tale, as it stands, is so exceedingly plain, and the fights, murders, escapes and pursuits described upon so even a breath, that it is hard to believe the great, more than life-size dolls minded whether they were hit over the head or not. It is as though one hero deals another a tremendous blow that sends

him crashing down like a tree, and as he dies he says: 'This is a bad day for me.' And the murderer replies: 'And for me, too,' and goes off to tell his wife:

'So-and-so is dead.'
'Did you kill him?'
'Yes.'
'Well!' said she, and her face got red.

This is, of course, an exaggeration, but there are passages in 'The Outlaw' which are very nearly as bald.

There is no doubt that the very large number of words of one syllable help to keep the tone low. They have a curious effect upon the reader. He finds himself, as it were, reading aloud, spelling out the tale, and this is helped by such sentences as: 'He was quiet, shy, what we call a dark horse.' That 'we' seems to belong to a god-like world of pastors and masters who are explaining the dark horse to us for the very first time. The story itself is full of incident, but it moves us as little as a pageant without music or colour. True, we cannot expect these huge heroes, with their peaked helmets, their heavy shields and spears, to break into a dance; but were the horns of warm wine never tossed down to a vocal accompaniment, or did the ladies never sing as they served? Even in the account of the great game upon the ice our chief impression is of the solemnity of the participants rather than their skill.

From these lean days we turn to the days full of fatness described in Mr. Eden Phillpotts' new book, 'Evander.' The scene is Italy, and the time — perhaps the early spring of every year. Not the wild, boisterous early spring that leaps over the winter fields in England, but early spring in the South, and if we were not too timid to say so — in the heart of man. There is a moment when, stepping into the air, we are conscious that the earth is young again and glittering with little flowers and streams and

laughter; our soul flies out of its hiding-place, looking for a play-fellow, and it refuses to be nourished any longer upon serious foods. It wants to be talked to in the language of Fancy, and it fully expects a song or a dance, or at least a few verses, in the course of the smallest conversation. Modern writers for whom a new exercise-book means perforce a new novel look with a cold eye upon the creature while it is in this giddy state of exuberance, and refuse to give it their attention until it has sobered down; but Mr. Phillpotts has taken exquisite pity on it, and provided a *festa* where those superfluous and enchanting things for which it hungers are given their rightful importance.

The story is simple. Livia, the daughter of a peculiarly engaging washerwoman, is married to a young woodman, Festus. One day while she was carrying his dinner she stopped in the forest, playing with the *panisci,* and she was attacked by wolves. The tiny creatures, who realized they would get no more little honey-cakes if she was eaten, urged her to call upon Apollo to save her. And in a moment the God of Light appeared, marvellously beautiful, frightened off the animals, and rescued her. But when she explained to him that she didn't really worship him at all — that before her marriage she had worshipped Venus, and since she had adopted her husband's god, Bacchus — he was extremely offended, and commanded her to tell her husband that he expected both of them to worship him in future, and 'if you would hear more concerning me, command my servant, Evander, to your humble board.' This last piece of advice nearly proved the undoing of Livia, for she found Evander so attractive that, after making Festus' life a perfect misery, she ran away with him. Evander was an intellectual. Young, ardent, not unlike Apollo in looks, a great talker, and a man held in high esteem by the village people for his learning and his dignified behaviour, he was nevertheless as cold-hearted as a trout and totally lacking in a sense of humour. Livia bore

with him as long as she could, then she escaped, and swimming across the lake returned to her aged mother's cottage. This so infuriated Apollo that he set forth to kill her, but Bacchus, to whom Festus had explained the whole situation, waylaid him, and after a long argument dissuaded him from his purpose. Livia and Festus thereupon took up their life together and were happier than before. But Evander, although he derived some comfort from the composition of pessimistic verses, was left disconsolate, not because of Livia's forsaking him, but because of the way the affair had gone.

This takes place upon the borders of a lake among purple mountains covered with chestnut bloom and carpeted with flowers. Little baby fauns run in and out of the story; an oread, a minor poet, wanders through, always looking for somebody to whom she can recite her verses; in the moonlight the naiads, tired of the water springs, come down to the lake to swish and sing.

But the delicate, bright atmosphere in which this enchanting book is bathed must be left for the reader to enjoy.

(*January 2, 1920.*)

DRAGONFLIES

Blindman	By Ethel Colburn Mayne
New Wine in Old Bottles	By Eleanor Mordaunt
Interim	By Dorothy Richardson

Who can tell, watching the dragonfly, at what point in its swift angular flight it will suddenly pause and hover, quivering over this or that? The strange little jerk — the quivering moment of suspension — we might almost fancy they were the signs of a minute inward shock of recognition felt by the dragonfly. 'There is something here; something here for me. What is

it?' it seems to say. And then, at the same instant, it is gone. Away it darts, glancing over the deep pool until another floating flower or golden bud or tangle of shadowy weed attracts it, and again it is still, curious, hovering over. . . .

But this behaviour, enchanting though it may be in the dragonfly, is scarcely adequate when adopted by the writer of fiction. Nevertheless, there are certain modern authors who do not appear to recognize its limitations. For them the whole art of writing consists in the power with which they are able to register that faint inward shock of recognition. Glancing through life they make the discovery that there are certain experiences which are, as it were, peculiarly theirs. There is a quality in the familiarity of these experiences or in their strangeness which evokes an immediate mysterious response — a desire for expression. But now, instead of going any further, instead of attempting to relate their 'experiences' to life or to see them against any kind of background, these writers are, as we see them, content to remain in the air, hovering over, as if the thrilling moment were enough and more than enough. Indeed, far from desiring to explore it, it is as though they would guard the secret for themselves as well as for us, so that when they do dart away all is as untouched, as unbroken as before.

But what is the effect of this kind of writing upon the reader? How is he to judge the importance of one thing rather than another if each is to be seen in isolation? And is it not rather cold comfort to be offered a share in a secret on the express understanding that you do not ask what the secret is — more especially if you cherish the uncomfortable suspicion that the author is no wiser than you, that the author is in love with the secret and would not discover it if he could?

Miss Ethel Colburn Mayne is a case in point. In these short stories which she has published under the title of 'Blindman' we have the impression that what she wishes to convey is not

the event itself, but what happens immediately after. That is, one might say, her moment — when the party is over and the lights are turned down, but the room is still left just as it was with the chairs in little groups, with somebody's flowers left to wither, with a scrap of the paper on the floor that somebody has dropped. One might almost fancy that there still lingered in the air the vibration of voices and music — that the mirrors still held the shadows of shadows. To reconstruct what has happened without disturbing anything, without letting in any more light and, as far as possible, adding nothing — that would seem to be the author's desire. But she is so fearful lest the atmosphere of her story be broken by a harsh word or a loud footfall that she is ever on the point of pulling down another blind, silently locking another door, holding up a warning finger and tip-toeing away until the reader feels himself positively bewildered. His bewilderment is not decreased by the queer sensation that he shares it with the author and that she would not have it less. 'There is something here — something strange. . . .' But does she ever get any nearer to the strange thing than that? We feel that she is so content with the strangeness, with the fascination of just hinting, just suggesting, that she loses sight of all else.

Mrs. Eleanor Mordaunt's latest book, 'Old Wine in New Bottles,' is a collection of short stories likewise. But never, never could she be accused of dropping the bone to grasp the shadow. This is a book without a shadow, without — for all its obese Chinamen, foul opium dens, prostitutes, negroes, criminals, squalid cafés, murders at sea and lecherous Prussian officers — a hint of strangeness. It would be interesting to know Mrs. Eleanor Mordaunt's opinion of these stories. Are they merely the expression of her contempt for the public taste? We cannot think so. She has catered for it too lavishly, too cunningly — she has even set new dishes before it with unfamiliar spices.

But on the other hand she can hardly agree with the publishers' announcement that these pretentious, preposterous stories are 'vibrant with the common passions of humanity.' Let us examine one which is typical of them all. It is called 'Peepers All.' Rhoda Keyes is a girl in a jam factory. She is beautiful 'with her yellow hair . . . the creamy pillow of her neck, the full curve of her breast in the flimsy blouse, the shapely hips beneath the tight sheath skirt.' She lives with her man, who is a sailor, in a first-floor room opposite a Chinaman's shop. Every afternoon at five o'clock she comes home, strips to the waist, carefully washes herself, and then changes her clothes before going off for a lark in the street with her pals. Now it happens that the filthy fat old Chinaman can see into her bedroom, so every afternoon he sits looking through the blind. 'More than once he put out the tip of his tongue and licked his lips; the hands lying on his fat knees opened and shut.' He is not the only spectator. Unknown to him his two friends, Fleischmann, a German Jew, in the White Slave traffic, and Ramdor, a Eurasian, share the exhibition, and all three of them determine to seduce the innocent, careless, heedless Rhoda. They are repulsed, and in their anger confide in each other and arrange that she shall be lured to the Chinaman's room and discovered there by her husband. But at the last moment her place is taken by a poor cripple, wearing her hat and coat, who receives the blow meant for Rhoda, and dies murmuring: 'Greater love — eh, dearie me, 'ow does it go, I've lost a bit — but summut — summut o' this sort — ter lay down 'is life fur — fur 'is pal.'

We protest that such a story, such a mixture of vulgarity, absurdity and ugliness, is an insult to any public that can spell its letters.

'Interim,' which is the latest slice from the life of Miriam Menderson, might almost be described as a nest of short stories. There is Miriam Menderson, the box which holds them all, and

really it seems there is no end to the number of smaller boxes that Miss Richardson can make her contain. But 'Interim' is a very little one indeed. In it Miriam is enclosed in a Bloomsbury boarding-house, and though she receives, as usual, shock after shock of inward recognition, they are produced by such things as well-browned mutton, gas jets, varnished wallpapers. Darting through life, quivering, hovering, exulting in the familiarity and the strangeness of all that comes within her tiny circle, she leaves us feeling, as before, that everything being of equal importance to her, it is impossible that everything should not be of equal unimportance.

(*January 9, 1920.*)

WORDS — WORDS — WORDS

Responsibility . . . . . By James E. Agate

Mr. James Agate's new novel, 'Responsibility,' put us in mind of a conjurer whose performance we witnessed many years ago at a little tin theatre up country. The curtain rose upon a stage bare except for a small table. On the table there were an egg, a glass of water, a fan — and a pistol. The conjurer walked rapidly on to the stage, and without so much as a bow or a good evening, he seized the pistol and fired. This was by way of capturing our attention; our attention was caught. Whereupon, after roundly denouncing those of his profession whose intention it was to hold us in suspense and deceive us, he swore that with him there was positively no deception. What he proposed to juggle with lay upon the table plain to see — an egg, a glass of water and a fan. But 'pray do not imagine . . . he for his part absolutely refused to promise . . . if we were fools enough to suppose . . .' Away he flew into rapid, extravagant speech, never pausing for one moment, but now and again in the thick

of it, when the fun was at its highest, seizing the pistol and firing a shot or two. Until suddenly — down came the curtain. Up it rolled again. There were the egg, the glass of water, and the fan, untouched, unaltered.

On page 1 of the introduction the hero of Mr. Agate's novel rushes on to the stage and seizes the pistol. On page 2 he cries: 'I hate to hold you, sir, in suspense: a *dénouement* which depends upon the element of surprise is essentially a disappointment at the second reading — and who is the writer who will be content with a single taste of his quality? . . . So I lay my cards on the table. They consist of a sorry hero, a mistress adored and abandoned, and a son' . . .

And then — away he flies through forty-four pages of introduction plentifully sprinkled with pistol shots — faster and faster, until on page 339 down comes the curtain, the performance is over, and there are the cards lying on the table — the sorry hero, the mistress adored and abandoned, the son — untouched, unaltered.

Well, what matter? Is not this soliloquy brilliant enough positively to exhaust our capacity for attending? What should we have done if, plus the pistol shots, Mr. Agate had juggled with a plot as well? Nevertheless we are left with the queer suspicion that there is some deception after all. We are not his enemies, neither are we dumbfounded and dismayed by the excessive novelty of his opinions, nor can we discover any need for him to exhort us to 'calm yourselves, good readers.' Why, then, does the hero think it necessary to shout so loud, to be so defiant, so sure we are bound to disagree with him, so scornful whether we do or whether we don't, so eager to shock us, so determined to stand no nonsense from us — why does he, in fine, protest so much?

This manner of his sets us wondering what it is all about — what it all amounts to. It sets us searching for the real Edward

Marston without his table and his audience. If we were led to expect no more than entertainment our search would not be justified, for there are parts of 'Responsibility' which are entertainment of a very high order; but the author, if we read him aright, flies a great deal higher. His hero is not content to take life as it comes; he goes towards it urgently, loving, hating, wanting 'to know a million things,' but accepting nothing. It is never merely a question of Edward Marston living in Manchester in the 'nineties; it is the case of Edward Marston *v.* The Universe. It is a brave theme, but the author's treatment of it is a deal too confident to be successful. He cannot resist his hero's passion for display. And this passion is so ungoverned that we cannot see the stars for the fireworks.

(*January 16, 1920.*)

THE STALE AND THE FRESH

All Roads Lead to Calvary . By Jerome K. Jerome
Invisible Tides . . . . . By Beatrice Kean Seymour

'All Roads Lead to Calvary' is another novel. It is not more; it is one of that enormous pile of novels. . . . 'Are they fresh?' 'Yes, baked to-day, Madame.' But they are just the same as those that were baked yesterday and the day before — and the day before that. So much flour, a sprinkle of currants, a smear of sugar on the top. Melancholy, melancholy thought of all those people steadily munching, asking for another, and carrying perhaps a third one home with them in case they should wake up in the night and feel — not hungry, exactly — but 'just a little empty.'

Joan Allway comes to London to be a journalist. She meets a great many people. She has an immediate success, first with a series of articles on Old London Churches and then with

Sermons, which are published every Sunday in a famous paper, the editor making it a condition that her photograph appears at the head of each. For she is a great beauty. She falls in love with a married man who may well be Prime Minister one of these days, if the breath of scandal never blows him into the mire. He turns to her for help, for with all her beauty and womanliness she has a Man's Mind. And then, because his pitiful wife, who paints her face and wears a wig and tries to smoke cigarettes, attempts to poison herself, so that her husband and Joan may be happy, Joan makes the great sacrifice. Comes the war. Again she loves — this time the editor who found her 'Old London Churches' had the Stevensonian touch. She is a nurse. She goes to France. She cuts off her hair and puts on man's uniform and really sees what a front-line trench is like. And comes home, and is found by the editor turned airman, 'beneath the withered trees beside the shattered fountain.' Here is the last mouthful:

> 'Perhaps you are right,' she admitted. 'Perhaps that is why He made us male and female: to teach us to love.'
>
> A robin broke into a song of triumph. He had seen the sad-faced ghosts steal silently away.

Mrs. Seymour's first novel, 'Invisible Tides,' is of a very different quality. It has its weaknesses, but it is full of feeling. If the author were not so conscious that she is writing a novel, she would be a great deal more successful. She is over-anxious to fit all together, to explain, and to make us part of that little world which she has found so passionately interesting. The early part of the book, which describes the childhood of the hero, Hilary Sargent, and of the heroine, Helena, is, to our thinking, unimportant. Hilary is quite a nice little boy, and his mother, telling him about the man who wrote 'Treasure Island,' is an attractive mother, but even the tragedy when this same gay

young mother drowns herself does not really affect the later life of Hilary. As to Helena's childhood, it is the familiar childhood of our young person who is shaping to be a heroine. She is 'not understood'; she is 'difficult'; her mother wishes she were more like other girls. But when these two meet, in spite of Mrs. Seymour's leaning towards sentimentality, they do become individual, and we are convinced that they love each other. The war enters into their lives, and from this moment there is a great quickening of the emotion, and the description of how these two lives are laid waste is very moving. With the war, all the pretty, delicate, 'quaint,' fanciful flowers that grow too thickly in Mrs. Seymour's garden and that she is far too ready to make into garlands wherewith to adorn her pages, are withered. We feel it is unbearable for her to see them gone, but we assure her that the hardy roots which remain are those she ought to cultivate.

(*January 16, 1920.*)

AMUSEMENT

Sir Limpidus . . . . By Marmaduke Pickthall

'Come hither, all who love a merry jest!' cries the small boy who discovers that Limpidus Fitzbeare has made no end of an ass of himself. His words might be taken as Mr. Marmaduke Pickthall's advice to his readers while he unfolds, with immense gusto and high spirits, the tale of one whose success in life was the result of his quite remarkable talent for doing and saying the asinine thing. And the asinine thing is, in this connection, the right thing, the sound thing, the kind of thing which stamped an Englishman as superior to the whole rest of the world, as a being whose life was divided (and rightly divided) between enjoying his vast preserve, England, and keep-

ing the foreigner, the outsider, and the man whom one did not know, in his rightful place.

Sir Limpidus Fitzbeare was born at Clearfount Abbey in the 'sixties under a cloudless sky, and he might be said to have basked his life through in the same brilliant weather. He was the heir to vast estates; his income was seventy thousand pounds a year, and his excellent father, Sir Rusticus, so ordered his constitution that by the time he came of age he was capable of enjoying to the full these by no means paltry advantages. From a 'priver' he passed to the famous old school which, in his father's words, 'takes the corners off a man and forms him on the proper pattern for an Englishman of our condition who doesn't want to be stared at in the streets of London.'

> A fellow who has not been through it is handicapped in life especially one who has been brought up by women who give too much importance to religion. . . . You'll find out what is done by people of your sort, and learn to do it naturally. You'll learn to put religion, art, learning and literature, and all such matters in their proper place, and not attach too much importance to 'em. . . .

It was while there that his remarkable talent for discovering the right thing first pushed into the light, and, the conditions being perfectly congenial, grew at such a rate that by the time he was ready for Cambridge, it had attained to its full height. Indeed, such was its power that he became absorbed into it — part of it — and could not be seen, except for a moment or two, for its flowers and leaves and fruits. So that in spite of Cambridge, London, the diplomatic service, a seat in Parliament, fame, lovely women, and finally a place in the Cabinet, he remained the boy he was, walking in the middle of the street

'with a certain swing, the chin in air, the elbows raised and managing a tightly-rolled-up umbrella in a certain way.'

Had the perfect weather continued, we see no reason why Sir Limpidus should not have been one of the most successful Prime Ministers England has ever had. But, alas! a year or two before the war the glass began to fall, and there was such an ugly look in the political sky, such a disagreeable sense of an impending storm, that he and his colleagues welcomed wholeheartedly the Supreme Diversion.

Mr. Marmaduke Pickthall's energy never flags. He carries his book along at a great pace, yet he misses nothing on the way that will give point to his story. But — time — time! Have we the time to spare for it all? Once we have been given the sum — once we have added it up and found it comes to 'Sir Limpidus' — have we the time to go on proving and proving it, and finding, with a chuckle that lasts through two hundred and fifty-four pages, that 'the answer is always the same'?

We are the children of an ungracious and a greedy age. Perhaps it is not so much that we are difficult to amuse, but we are quickly tired. Repetition — the charm of knowing what is coming, of beating the tune and being ready with the smile and the laugh at just the right moment, no longer has the power to soothe and distract us. It wakes in us a demon of restlessness, a fever to break out of the circle of the tune, however, brilliant the tune may be.

(*January 30, 1920.*)

PORTRAIT OF A CHILD

Coggin . . . . . By Ernest Oldmeadow

We have more than once entertained a suspicion that Mary hated her little lamb and could not bear the way it persisted in

running after her, rocking along on its little grey-white legs, stopping dead for a moment, and then rocking along again. As to the time when it followed her to school, we imagine that really was the last straw, and no doubt she joined the other children laughing and sporting at sight of the silly little thing standing in the doorway with its blue bow and its mild eyes. . . . But of late years we have been called upon to play the pet lamb to so many young authors that the tables are turned — so much so that our bleat is become a positive groan of dismay when Mary or her little brother drags us off to school. And if that school be moreover a public school, and the child a well-fed, chubby little child fresh from the bosom of his upper middle-class family — if we are called upon to share once more the feelings of the new boy — why, then we are hard put to it not to turn into lions and devour our leaders.

But Mr. Oldmeadow makes no such demands on behalf of his little hero, Harry Coggin, aged ten years and eleven months, son of William Coggin, marine-store dealer, the Canal Bank, Bulford-on-Deme. It is true Harry does go to school and he is a new boy, but there his resemblance to those other children ends. This strange, extraordinarily attractive little personality is Mr. Oldmeadow's discovery, and from the moment we meet him talking to George Placker, we are prepared to follow him to school or anywhere he may like to take us.

Coggin is an only child. His father calls himself a marine-store dealer, but he is in fact a rag-and-bones man, and — the time being 1851, and school inspectors unknown plagues — his son is more or less a working partner in the firm. But among the rubbish there were often torn books and papers, and these attracted little Coggin — so much so that he got a man at the saw-mills to teach him to read for a shilling, paid for out of his pocket money of one penny a week. Having learned to read he becomes his own schoolmaster, and at the time he talks to George

Placker at the canal-side he knows enough to be eligible for the Samuel Robson Scholarship which would admit him to the Bulford Grammar School. Placker is the leader of the atheists, Chartists, infidels and traitors in the town, and he determines that Harry Coggin shall win that scholarship to spite the governing classes and give the rich a fright.

So the unprecedented thing happens. Harry enters for the scholarship; is examined, in the absence of the headmaster, by the rector, and, in the face of the most violent opposition on the part of the same headmaster and three-fourths of the town, the rector judges him the successful candidate. There follows a strange, deep disturbance in the town, and all caused by little Coggin, with his white face and large grey-blue eyes, his boots that are much too big, and his clothes that are too heavy. He is thrown by Placker and Company into the quiet pool, and great, widening ripples flow away and away from him, and are not quietened when the book ends. But it is Coggin who matters — Coggin, meeting the rector the morning after the scholarship and explaining that he taught himself writing and Latin.

> What made you skip the first declensions? . . . And why did you skip the cardinal numbers? . . . and you seem to have passed over the fourth conjugation of verbs.

In his desire to be deferential Coggin rose from his seat and stood beside the pile of planks:

> I am very sorry, sir (he said). I could not learn the parts of the book you mention because these pages were torn out. . . . When books come to our yard my father lets me look at them, and if they are very old and torn I can keep them. My Latin grammar has no covers, but I think it would be a very good one if eleven pages were not torn out. . . .

The novel as a whole lacks proportion. The closing scenes, with the rector for principal figure, are far too drawn out; they are, to our thinking, a grave blemish. The author throws all restraint to the winds, and indulges in such an outpouring of sentimentality that it is a wonder his hero is not submerged. But the waters do not touch him, and he remains in our memory a child unlike other children, a careful, solitary little figure, forlorn on the fringe of life.

(*January 30, 1920.*)

THE EASY PATH

Full Circle . . . . . By Mary A. Hamilton

There is no doubt that the author of 'Full Circle' has faced her difficult subject with courage and sincerity. But it is the novelist's courage, the novelist's sincerity. These are good, sound, familiar weapons which in a world of turn-tails and sentimentalists we cannot affect to despise, but it is just because her handling of them is so dexterous that we find ourselves wishing to Heaven that Mrs. Hamilton would throw both away and begin all over again without them. It is, we realise, a rude measure to propose, for it would mean the sacrifice of the charming composition of her novel; and this would not be easy for an author whose mind delights in a sense of order, in composing for each character and scene the surroundings that are appropriate and adequate to it. What is the result? The result is another extremely able novel, written with unerring taste and sentiment, well informed, interesting. . . . It is a great deal better than the average novel — but is that enough? Just for the reason that in taking the easy accepted path Mrs. Hamilton has looked towards the difficult one, we say it is not enough and that 'Full Circle' is by no means the novel it might have been.

Her difficult subject is this. Here we have the Quilhamptons, a family of brothers and sisters, passionately united by the tie of blood and by their affection for a beautiful home. They are met together on the occasion of the eldest sister's marriage, and the meeting is overshadowed by the fact that they realise the time has come when the 'home life' must end and they must go their various ways and risk losing themselves in life. We are made to feel that in their case the risk is by no means small. Spontaneous, rich, gifted, original creatures that they are, they are, somehow, a shade too fine for life; there is a doubt whether, at the last moment, the habit to withdraw, to seek shelter, will not prove too strong. Of them all, Bridget is the one who, the others feel, is most likely to win through and be happy. Staying with them is a Socialist friend of their brother Roger, one Wilfred Elstree. This strange creature is a herald (but against all the rules carrying a trumpet) whom life has sent to parley with them on the eve of the battle. Bridget not only listens; she goes over to him. She accepts life as her swell friend as personified in rough, crude, harsh, hideous, selfish Elstree. At his touch her blood catches fire; at his glance she swoons. They live together until he tires of her and throws her away, to snatch from Roger's arms a little doll of a creature, and, after breaking her, to disappear for four years. On his reappearance he asks Bridget to marry him, but she begs him to wait for six weeks, and at the end of that time he is, of course, engaged to another. Now, if Bridget had really loved Elstree, if he had not been such an out-and-out ranting, roaring stage-Socialist, if their relationship had been important, and yet there had been in his nature some queer brutal streak, some lack of imagination which drove him to seek in another only the means of renewing himself — if Bridget had recognised this and yet won through. . . . But Love? We have a most convincing account of her physical reactions, of her enjoyment of him and the anguish she suffered when he left her

and she waited for the bell to ring — for a letter — a sign — hoped and gave up hope. But Love? Why, on his reappearance after four years Mrs. Hamilton sacrifices the feelings of her heroine to a description of the room by firelight in which Elstree is sitting. Fatal gift of the pen, fatal sincerity of the novelist! How can we believe in Bridget unless we have the whole of her? How can we accept the fact that she did win through if we are not told to what? — if we are put off, cleverly, indeed, with a description of the fascination of London?

We realise in writing this we are too severe upon the author, but it is her fault. If she did convey the impression that she might have written 'Full Circle' from within, how can we be content with her view of it from without?

(*February 6, 1920.*)

PROMISE

Gold and Iron . . . . . By Joseph Hergesheimer

Mr. Joseph Hergesheimer is a writer whose few books have been hailed by the generous critic as masterpieces of their kind. Perhaps it is owing to the fact that he comes from America that their praise has been more formal, less familiar, less — may we say? — avuncular than that which they are accustomed to bestow upon our very own young men. In the latter case, it is their habit upon the appearance of a first novel, however superb they may consider it, to acknowledge the fact that the writer is a young writer. 'These young men have grown up in our midst. They have attended our schools, they have been to our universities and come down. While we do not dispute their genius for one moment, we question whether the finest flower, the ripest fruit is yet within our hands.' But Mr. Hergesheimer has been allowed no youth. They have been to the woods

for him already; they have returned with an armful of those strange branches that look and smell like laurel, and there is nothing more to be said except to say it over again.

Nevertheless it is just this quality of 'promise' which we venture to think he possesses. It is more noticeable than ever in the stories collected under the title 'Gold and Iron.' These three stories are all most obviously the work of a writer who feels a great deal more than he can at present express. They are in form very similar. In the long, slow approach to the 'crisis,' he writes well and freely; he takes his time, one has the impression that he feels, here, at this point he is safe, and can afford to let himself go. But when the heart of the story is reached, when there is nothing left to depend upon — to cling to — then he is like a young swimmer who can even swim very well, disport himself unafraid and at ease as long as he knows that the water is not out of his depth. When he discovers that it is — he disappears. So does Mr. Hergesheimer. But watching sympathetically from the bank, we hope the disappearance is only temporary.

(*February 6, 1920.*)

SIMPLICITY

Shepherd's Warning . . . . By Eric Leadbitter
Eli of the Downs . . . . . By C. M. A. Peake

The author of to-day who chooses to write a peasant novel sets himself a by no means easy task. We have grown very suspicious of the peasant 'as he is seen,' very shy of dialect which is half prophecy, half potatoes, and more than a trifle impatient of over-wise old men, hot-blooded young ones, beauties in faded calico, and scenes of passion in the kitchen while the dinner is hotting up or getting cold. The psychological novel, the novel of

manners and what we might call the experimental novel, inspires no such distrust; its field is wide, there would seem to be no limit to the number of its possible combinations, and we have not that strange sense that the author has committed himself to a more or less limited and determined range of experiences. There is, moreover, in the latter case, no temptation to over-emphasize the relation of the peasant to the earth; to make of him a creature whose revolutions are so dependent on the seasons that it is impossible for him to fall in love out of May, or to die except at the year's end. But more difficult still to resist is the inclination to overstep the delicate boundary between true simplicity and false. True simplicity is hard, reluctant soil to cultivate, and the harvest reaped is small, but it wants but a scatter of seed flung broadcast over the false light soil to produce an appearance of richness, of growing and blowing which mocks the patient effort of the honest *cultivateur*.

Mr. Eric Leadbitter's latest book, 'Shepherd's Warning,' is, however, an example of the peasant novel wherein these several difficulties are overcome. They cease, indeed, after the first few pages, to have any reality in the reader's mind. In this extremely careful, sincere piece of work, the author makes us feel that he knows every step of the ground he treads, and that his familiarity with it prevents him from wasting time over anything that is not essential to the development of his story. There is not a moment's hesitation; Mr. Leadbitter moves within the circle of his book, easy, confident, and yet in some curious way impressing us as one who is very reticent and not given to exaggeration. He would rather let things speak for themselves, and tell their own tale. What is it all about? It is the life story of Bob Garrett, a farm labourer, from the moment he reaches the top of the hill until — down, down, slowly down — he is an old man with just strength enough to creep into the sun and call his cat. It

is an account of how his three orphaned grandchildren, who live with him, grow from little children to young people in the prime of life. It tells how little Sally Dean, whose father murdered his wife because she was a bad woman with wandering blood and wild ways, grew up with the curse on her and went to the bad herself, and, fascinating Bob Garrett's two grandsons, made one marry her that her unborn child, by another man, might have a father. Sally is the wild strain in the book; the thing that can't be accounted for, that seems to be good for nothing; she is the lovely poisonous weed that Bob Garrett can't abide to see growing among his plants, and yet he cannot stamp it out. She feels herself that she ought not to be as she is; but there it is, she can't get away, she can't make herself different, she must live. And we are shown how little by little she is accepted, and with that acceptance she changes in spite of herself; she is no longer an exotic running dark and bright in the hedges for any man to gather.

As the story moves, changes, deepens, gathering new life into it, and yet keeping the old, reaching out toward new issues, and then accepting those new issues as part of it, so the village, Fidding, goes through an identical experience. When Bob Garrett is head ploughman and the finest worker on the farm, it is a self-contained, solid, old-fashioned little place and remote even from the nearest town, Pricehurst. But gradually, like Bob Garrett, it becomes inadequate to the needs of the restless rising generation. They do not sweep it away, but they ignore it until it falls into the background, a small bundle of ancient cottages with nothing but the traces of their former pride and solidity. But what is there in New Fidding to compare with Old Fidding, where every man could have told you his neighbour's garden down to a row of radishes, and where, in spite of their differences, they were held together by an implicit acceptance of life; but not of 'the fever called living'?

'Eli of the Downs' is another novel that has its roots in the English country-side, but Mr. Peake is a writer who has not yet succeeded in putting a rein on his ambitions. In his eagerness to make a great figure of Eli he cannot resist picking him out, even when he is a very small one and scarce more than knee high, and overloading him with all the ornaments which are handed down as the heirlooms of childhood extraordinary. He hears tunes, sees colours, has a vision in church.

'I *did* see it grandmer,' he ended. . . .
'And what then, deary?'
'I . . . I don't know. I fink . . . I came back.'

Even though years afterwards, in a Japanese temple, his vision comes true, we highly suspect that 'I came back.' But this fault, which is apparent in the first pages of the book, persists throughout. The author, unlike Mr. Leadbitter, cannot leave his characters to speak their mind; he must speak it for them, and even reinforce their statements with a kind of running commentary and explanatory notes which are very tiring to keep up with. He seems, until he carries his simple shepherd overseas and sets him among highly embroidered scenes and persons, to expect our attention to flag. In that he is right, but the chief cause of our fatigue is precisely this habit of endeavouring to capture and recapture it. But the truth is that 'Eli of the Downs' ought to have been a short story of — certainly not more than five thousand words. We do not wish to be unkind to Mr. Peake; but we wish he would be a little less kind to himself, wish that he would slay a great many of his sheep and let us have one uninterrupted view of the shepherd.

(*February 13, 1920.*)

ORCHESTRA AND SOLO

Peter Jackson . . . . By Gilbert Frankau
The Dark River . . . By Sarah Gertrude Millin

In the old untroubled days before the Great Hunting, when London — Heart of Empire — still allowed her sleeping children to be served with meat and drink by spies, murderers, pimps and panders, before the Spirit of England was awake, while yet the Sea, which is England's mother, and Thames, who is the father of England ('and these twain mate in London Pool for all the world to see'), were the playground of youth, in — let us be honest — the stale old days before 1914, Peter Jackson was a cigar merchant with an almost passionate interest in cigarettes, and Patricia, his wife, was his pal. Not more than that? Reason cried (for she was the daughter of Dr. Heron Baynet, brain specialist, Harley Street, who had taught her to think): 'Is not that enough?' Instinct whispered 'No.' They had three thousand a year, a house in Lowndes Square, five servants, two children, a governess. Life was made up of family parties, theatre-going, a summer holiday, mornings at home and afternoons at the skating rink, and yet — and yet — all was not well with Patricia. She was thirty, and she wanted something more. As for Peter, he was too absorbed in business to think of Life. He thought in terms of cigars, he dreamed in cigarettes. It was not that money *quâ* money mattered so much — it was that Peter Jackson could not bear to be a failure. 'Weaklings to the wall, to the strong man the fruits of his brain. . . .'

But while Patricia, still unaware of matehood denied, wondered, and the tide in Peter's affairs rose and rose, the 'Beasts in gray, murder, rape and plunder in their swinish eyes,' came out of their lair and roared so that civilization might hear. For a month and three days Peter Jackson refused to answer

the 'eternal Questioning,' tried to ignore 'the khaki blossoming now like a brown flower at every street corner.' But one evening, after dinner, after telling his wife a little of what giving up the cigarettes would mean to him, he made her see — 'her eyes kindled at the prospect' — that he must go. And from that moment Patricia's problem was solved, her cup was full and brimming. For now she loved him utterly, beyond friendship. 'At a word she had become his mate, his woman to do with as as he would.' But from Peter Jackson these things were hidden.

On the strength of having been at one time Corporal Jackson of the Eton Dog-potters Peter got a commission, and gradually, with a man's job to his hand, the city faded. He became absorbed in the care of his men.

> . . . These men! For of the officers one does not write. The well-educated, the well-off, the comfortable classes must needs defend the country from which they draw their riches and their education, and he who did not do it — voluntarily, without compulsion or fear of compulsion — whatever his fancied responsibilities to his profession, to his business, to his house, to his women or his children, is surely anathema maranatha, the moral leper, the pariah among his kind. . . .

Can we not hear, dear reader, an echo of the applause which the Peters and Patricias of that time would have lavished upon such words?

Nevertheless, throughout the year's training before he left for France, Peter was troubled by business; there was a big drop on the cigars, and, bitterer still, the cigarettes had to go. Patricia saw his suffering.

> She suffered, and suffered damnably. . . . She even grew to resent her own children, their perpetual 'Daddy's going to France to kill Germans.' But neither the mate nor the mother

in Patricia flinched as pal or as playmate; she did her duty, laughter on her lips, gold head high.

Mr. Gilbert Frankau has called his novel a romance of married life. But why not of war — dreadful, bloody, glorious, stinking, frightful, magnificent war? The middle of his novel is, if one examines it, nothing but a roaring hymn in praise of killing, for killing is the Job of Jobs. True, poor bloody Tommy was blown to bits, men went mad, died in their thousands, filled the lamentable night with their shrieks and groans, but according to Mr. Frankau they died a man's death, and little children to-day, who look with wistful eyes upon their father's sword, may be taught to hope.

His hero came out of it with shell shock, neurasthenia, the fear of consumption, a broken man, *enfin* — but only for the time. In the country house that Patricia had 'made' for him, thanks to Heron Baynet, brain specialist, he soon recovered, and, cigars and cigarettes thrown to the winds, fell in love with his wife. The war had been unto him and unto that woman whom he took for his mate a cleansing fire. And (*courage, mes enfants, courage*) in a vision that comes to Peter's cousin God promises that:

> Never while earth endured would the Beast utterly perish: for God had created the Beast [Germany] even as he had created Man [the Allies] to subdue the Beast. Without this menace of the Beast, man's finest attribute — the very manhood of him — would atrophy. He would become flabby, emasculate; and in his flabbiness he would perish. . . .

Well, Mr. Frankau knows his public and we know it too. 'Peter Jackson' will go the round of that vast family the Hun-Haters, and the men will say: 'Stout chap, that writing fellow,' and the women: 'My dear, it is too marvellous for words — it

brings all the old thrill back again.' But we find ourselves wishing that he had kept his talent in a napkin rather than put it to such uses.

To read 'The Dark River' is, after so much wind and brass, to listen to a solo for the viola. Running through the book there is, as it were, a low, troubled throbbing note which never is stilled. Were that note more deliberate — not louder, or more forced, but, musically speaking, firmer — it would be a great deal more effective. This low, throbbing note is essential to Mrs. Millin's novel; and we must be very certain it is there, for though the story plays above and below it, that which gives it significance and holds our attention is the undertone. Perhaps a novel is never the novel it might have been, but there are certain books which do seem to contain the vision, more or less blurred or more or less clear, of their second selves, of what the author saw before he grasped the difficult pen. 'The Dark River' is one of these. Very often, when Mrs. Millin just fails to make her point, we feel it is not because she does not appreciate the point that is to be made, but because she is so aware of it herself that she takes it for granted on the part of the reader. It is a fascinating, tantalizing problem, how much an author can afford to leave out without robbing the characters of the 'situation'; but that is not quite Mrs. Millin's difficulty; she has rather misjudged a little what she has 'put in.'

The scene of the novel is South Africa, and the first nine chapters describe the life of John Oliver, diamond digger. It may seem, as the story unfolds itself and is found to be not so much concerned with John Oliver as with the Grant family, and Alma Grant in particular, that these chapters are disproportionately long, but Mrs. Millin knew what she was about when she wrote them. They give a sudden view of a country and of an experience that the Grants could not understand, even though they lived in its very midst. But the heart of the book is Alma Grant and

how she, who seemed so made for life, somehow just missed life, just missed the fineness of everything. This girl waiting, at first because she could so well afford to wait — the best was bound to be kept for her — and then gradually realizing that, after all, others had pushed in front of her, they were choosing and taking and sharing, until there was nothing for her — nothing but Van Reede — is an unusual and fascinating character.

(*February 20, 1920.*)

MYSTERY AND ADVENTURE

The Death of Maurice . . By Barry Pain
The Ancient Allan . . . . By H. Rider Haggard

In the publishers' announcement which accompanies 'The Death of Maurice' there is a suggestion that the reader may well be surprised to find that a humorist is capable of writing a really well-designed and cleverly worked-out mystery novel. But we should have thought that humorous writing depended almost entirely for its success upon the author's sense of design, and his ability to give it adequate expression. He, of all writers, cannot afford to leave anything *en l'air*, anything to the imagination, for it is not to the imagination that he makes his appeal, but to the reader's sense of fancy and delight in invention. With all due respect we might liken him in the world of letters to the music-hall artist in the theatrical world, whose performances appear to be spontaneous, accidental almost, whereas there is not an action, movement, glance which is unrelated to the expert whole.

'The Death of Maurice' is a very good example of the high level of Mr. Barry Pain's technical accomplishment. From the opening chapter it might almost be said to 'play itself,' so easy

and sure is the author's touch, and yet he has guarded against monotony by giving us a great deal more of real characterization than is usual in such stories. Who killed Maurice Carteret is never a tragic question; it is not even a startling one. A moment or two after his death, his friend, while he waited for the man-servant to fetch the police, heard, beyond the garden, someone playing the flute — a fragment of 'Solveig's Song.' It was a still, clear night. Maurice lay dead on the garden path, and then there came the sound of the flute. Who killed Maurice Carteret? Who could it be playing the flute? It is not that these questions seem to fall hard on one another in the mind of the reader; but they seem to be of precisely equal importance and interest. They suggest that there is, in either case, a little problem to be solved, and, if you are sufficiently interested in human nature to care to study the widely different reactions of a certain circle of people to either of these questions . . . 'come with me, dear reader,' says Mr. Barry Pain.

Thus, very cleverly, the author keeps us in two minds. While we accompany him on his search he presents each character in so intriguing a way that we forget what we are after until, the moment our curiosity is fully aroused, we are made aware that, after all, our real business is to find the murderer. Is the murderer ever really found? And who was it, finally, who played the flute? Some readers will find a perfectly satisfactory answer to both these questions, but others will be left wondering.

'The Ancient Allan,' Sir Rider Haggard's new novel, is a far simpler variety of the pastime novel. It opens on a familiar note:

> Now, I, Allan Quatermain, come to the weirdest (with one or two exceptions perhaps) of all the experiences which it has amused me to employ my idle hours in recording here in a strange land, for after all England is strange to me.

This is the kind of thing to settle down to when the destination is Devonshire, if it is not Cornwall; but, alas! it needs — it dreadfully needs — the flying interruptions outside the carriage window — the mysterious interruptions of people's sandwiches — the indignant emotion aroused by the tea-basket, and the blissful sight of the train making a great scallop round the blue edge of the sea — to enable us to swallow such a very dusty dose of ancient Egypt.

Here is battle, murder and sudden death, wheels within chariot wheels, villains and heroes and black slaves, who in their land were kings; here is the mighty battle with the crocodile, the torture of the boat — all the ingredients that once upon a time, only to get a whiff of, knew us hungry. But nowadays, to read of how one was placed in an open boat and another boat put on top, so that only the head and hands remained outside — to be launched on a river and allowed to linger — awakes no response in us at all.

(*February 27, 1920.*)

A PARTY

Uncle Lionel . . . . . By S. P. B. Mais

Has it ever happened to the reader to be ushered into a room where there are a large number of persons who know one another so well, so incredibly well, who are upon such charming, familiar terms that he would imagine they had been at one golden time all babies together in a common nursery, leaping about in the firelight while good Nanny prepared their baths? It is not the most comfortable experience for the stranger. Man may be an adaptable creature, but to slough off a skin, acquire a protective colouring, equip himself with a hood and sting or velvet paws, is not an affair of five minutes. The only possible

adjustment in the circumstances is to adopt an air of keen animation and plunge — listening, taking it all for granted, knowing it all inside out. The reader to whom this has happened will remember, perhaps, how he smiled until he felt himself in yellow stockings cross-gartered; how, finally he was conscious of that air of animation withdrawing from him, beam by beam, until it set in his bosom like a declining sun.

'Uncle Lionel' puts us in mind of this experience, but with the difference that this time we are buttonholed by the person who really does know more about everybody else than they could know about themselves, though he is for ever telling us in the same breath that this world is not his world any more than it is ours. This estrangement is valuable because it frees him from the necessity of explaining 'why.' These are the facts — make of them what you please — and if you must have a Kaiser to hang, there is always the modern spirit lurking over there in the corner and calling the tune.

So we find ourselves in the midst of Patricia and Michael and Joan and Renton and Phyllis and Wreford and Hélène and Trefusis, and where they met each other or how long they have known each other we cannot make out. Suffice it that they are all talking at once and squabbling and going off with one another, and falling in and out of love for no earthly reason we can discover. There is no plan and Michael and Patricia are only more prominent than the others because they are more extravagant. Who is Patricia? A collection of ugly, shrewish, slangy remarks delivered at Michael, who adores her, and has the habit of disappearing — to be discovered by Uncle Lionel in surroundings that are of a decidedly Russian blend. But they have no more body or soul than the rest of their 'set.' Again we find ourselves wondering at the author's patience — nay, it is more than that — at the ease with which he can amuse himself, for that he is roundly, soundly amused from cover to cover is

plain to see. For him there are still traces of dew upon the old story of innocent little Phyllis taken to Brighton by the villain, only to find out at the last possible moment that his bedroom key is the same as her bedroom key. It is sorry fun to watch Mr. Mais gathering this shop-soiled old flower with quite an air and putting it in his pages. But we should have been prepared by the remark of a minor heroine a little earlier:

> 'Hélène,' snorted Beatrice, 'do preserve some sense of decency.'
>
> 'But I shall. We've thrashed it all out. We're going to have strings and strings of babies. . . .'

It is a nice question which of these two emotional moments is the more faded.

But come, let us slip away. The party is still going on. The party is going on for ever; but so, thank God, are the sky and the moving sea.

(*February 27, 1920.*)

ON THE ROAD

Pilgrims of Circumstance . . . . By G. B. Burgin

'Pilgrims of Circumstance' is Mr. Burgin's fifty-ninth novel. We have not read the fifty-eight which preceded it, but, if we may judge by this one, the author is not concerned with anything more serious than to amuse, or, perhaps it were truer to say, to distract his readers. For a long acquaintance with pastime novels forces us to make the distinction between amusement and distraction. By far the greater number of them aim at nothing more positive than a kind of mental knitting—the mind of the reader is grown so familiar with the pattern that the least possible effort is demanded of it, and yet this ravel of wool is

just enough to keep one from facing those grim uncomfortable creatures who are only too ready to stare one out of countenance.

O Life! why is it that so many of thy children are homeless, for ever doomed to have a little time to spare between the stages of the tedious journey? What can they do? They cannot spend the time staring out of windows. Is there nothing to go to see or hear or buy? Are there no books? Up and down the miles and miles of bookstalls range the uneasy travellers. There are so many books that the cities are darkened, the country is buried, the sky is blotted out by them. And somewhere on the shelves there are Mr. Burgin's fifty-eight novels, and a hand hovers, slipping in the fifty-ninth.

'It must be wonderful to write novels,' says somebody. 'It must be the most wonderful feeling, even if you don't take it desperately seriously, to be able to sit down and first create a small world of your very own, where anything can happen that you choose to let happen, where the most enchanting beings can meet one another. There needn't be a soul in it whom you don't want; you can just, being God, remove people by one of those dreadfully unfair "Acts of God." I think the moment you sit down to a fresh notebook and decide whom you'll have and where you'll put them must be more thrilling even than sitting down to a Bulb Catalogue. . . .' Well, let us see whom Mr. Burgin, after fifty-eight essays, has chosen: . . . the comic landlady, the swearing parrot, the ranting old actor roaring of Shakespeare and whiskey glasses, the handsome young man whom the bright girl loves, but whom the reckless beautiful woman, married to a brute of a husband, adores.

. . . 'Mrs. Pipples, I'm not sure, but I think I'm on my legs again.'

'I'm glad to hear it, sir. And though I'm a widow woman as says it, you don't offen see such legs as yours, sir.'

. . . Polly screaming another comprehensive oath that would have delighted the soul of a buccaneer.

. . . Said the Wreck sarcastically . . . 'I have a devilish thirst upon me which is but partially slaked.'

. . . She turned for a moment, faced him, then walked slowly down the mossy path, an occasional sunbeam filtering . . . upon her beautiful face and equally beautiful hair.

. . . 'Take me away from him. I would be your slave, your mistress, anything to get away from the awful degradation of my present life.'

Breathes the reader who, furnished with these quotations, could not imagine 'Pilgrims of Circumstance' for himself? But that is not the question. Come, let us begin at the beginning and go on to the end, and then stop. Let us discover that there are even two comic landladies and the second is called Mrs. Wanks, and she lives at daggers drawn with Mrs. Pipples. Let us hear how the parrot uses 'un'oly langwidge' to the butcher. Softly—softly, dear reader, and perhaps by the time we have finished, and if we are still waiting, Mr. Burgin will have made the grand choice again, and his sixtieth volume will be ready for our empty hands.

(*March 19, 1920.*)

'MY TRUE LOVE HATH MY HEART'

A Man's Honour . . . . . By Violet M. Methley

Underneath the price of this novel there is a blue hand sinister pointing to the words: 'Read first turn-over of cover.' We are obedient, and here is the cream: Valentia Carland, misunderstanding husband, follows him England, Ceylon. Native rising; hunted like wild animals in tropical woods by native prince;

end, happiness cost sister's life, heroic self-sacrifice. Fine story finely told, great ability, tense situations, thrilling, grim, interesting. . . .

What is the misunderstanding between Valentia and Charles? In seeking for the answer we are confronted once again by the Law by which all popular novelists are governed, and it is — whatever comes in at the door, let the door but be shaken, the handle rattled, a voice heard without — Love flies out of the window. It would seem there is no other adventure in life but hunting the sweet terrible boy. Shall we be amazed then if one or the other of his captors, their first fine fatigue over, tiptoes to the window and softly opens it? Alas! we are so far from the world of faëry to-day that the only satisfactory ending to our stories is — 'they lived unhappily ever after.' They never became King and Queen and lived in the castle beyond the blue mountains. Always, at the last moment, some happy accident awakened his suspicions or hers, and away flew Love and the chase began all over again.

Who of us can believe that Valentia Carland, cutting roses in the old-world garden, singing 'in a low, sweet voice' the old-world song, blushing and burying her face in the flower-filled basket, regardless of possible thorns in the old-world way, was only terrified by that sharp report like the crack of a whip shattering the peace of the afternoon? She never for a moment feared anything but the worst.

> His heart in me keeps him and me in one,
> My heart in him his thoughts and senses guide.

The words, she felt, described exactly what she and Charles were to each other, and then 'bang' and she rushed into the parlour to find her husband and her sister struggling together for the possession of the newly-fired revolver. What had happened? Little shrill hysterical Letty cried that Charles had tried

to kill himself. Is that true? He will not say 'Yes,' and he will not say 'No.' Then, of course, it is true.

> 'Don't you understand that I would rather have found you dead — yes, rather that! — than know you to be so utterly callous — utterly heartless, as you are!'

Any woman a shade less blissfully married might, at least, have asked her husband if he were unhappy or had lost his fortune, but there were too many roses in Valentia's garden, and so she flings the window open and out flies Love.

Charles's regiment is ordered to Ceylon. Before he leaves he feels it his duty — after all, he *is* her husband — to explain to Valentia that he was not trying to commit suicide; it was Letty. Oh, her burning scorn that he should try to shield himself behind a helpless girl! There is nothing to be done but to let him go to Ceylon without so much as 'good-bye,' and when he is gone and Letty has explained that his story was the true one, to follow him there and ask his pardon. But by the time she arrives at Colombo, Charles has gone with an expedition to Kandy, and by the time she has followed him there he has met with a *femme fatale,* and as Valentia raises the curtain over the door of his room he stoops to kiss 'the smiling provocative lips.' As if this were not enough, at this point the native prince enters upon the scene and begins his evil, unsleeping pursuit of her; and then, until the end of the book, we are in the thick of horrid native warfare, grim enough in all conscience, culminating in a hideous massacre and a blood-curdling description of death by the elephant. At the darkest hour the native prince demands that Valentia shall be given him and Charles set free as payment. But Letty goes instead, kills herself before the Old Spider has caught her, and before Charles, rushing into the Private Apartments, kills him.

And as, no doubt, always happens, with the dead still un-

buried, the 'indescribable' horrors scarcely a day old, Valentia and Charles shut the door and shut the window again, and vow that they and Love shall dwell together until. . . .

(*March 26, 1920.*)

SHORT STORIES

The Clintons, and Others By Archibald Marshall
The Surrender, and Other Happenings By Mary Gaunt
A Bit at a Time . . . By Dion Clayton Calthrop

In our infant days we never thought to charge the teller of the story with being in league with the Dustman. They were two separate visitors, and the former was our friend, and the latter, who never failed in coming, was our enemy, but a gentle enemy. True, the teller of the tale always saw him coming long before we did, and informed us it was no use 'going on' ages — it seemed — before the soft poppy-dust descended. Still, we imagined that he hated to be overtaken as much as we did, and was trying his utmost, as we were, to ward off the fatal blow.

But with 'The Clintons' Mr. Archibald Marshall is Dustman to his own stories. They flow along so gently and so smoothly that the reader's mind is put to sleep, and asleep it stays while one episode merges into another. There is not a single jar or jolt in the whole book; there is not even an angle or a sharp outline. All is gently blurred as though we floated at twilight on a placid river through venerable English meadows, with many an ancient home of England half-glimpsed through the trees. For Mr. Marshall takes an especial delight in lingering over the mildly exquisite problems of family pride and family tradition, in tracing the fine inevitable line that divides your aristocrat from your common man, and in noting with almost a sympathetic shiver of apprehension what must happen when

that line is invaded. 'Kencote,' 'In That State of Life,' 'The Squire and the War,' all belong to this kind; and even 'Audacious Ann' depends for its full success upon the fact that the little lady is high-born. The other two stories — one about a builder and the other about a disappointed bookkeeper — are so subdued in tone, we gain the impression that the author is determined to keep them in their place. He is lenient with them because they are poor, plain folk; the builder is not to blame because he puts up 'abominations of desolation' where the old houses used to stand — he knows no better; and the meek bookkeeper, sorrowing over one blot on the fair page of the great ledger, is a pitiful example of the 'small man' . . . 'Thus the stream glideth.'

Far different is the climate of 'The Surrender, and Other Happenings.' In these exciting stories it is not only we who are kept awake; the characters sleep at their peril. If they are not fighting snow, there is a pack of timber-wolves, or an African swamp, or a mob of furious Chinamen or a horde of savages to be overcome. Mrs. Gaunt's method is — more or less — to think of an extraordinary background, double it, add one man, multiply by one terrible danger, keep on multiplying, substract all possible means of escape, draw a line, add one absolutely unexpected means of escape and one sweet gentle girl. The result is extremely readable, for the author is far more interested in the surroundings of her stories than in the characters themselves — and so are we.

> . . . Forty-five degrees below, perhaps it was more than forty-five degrees below, and he spat because he had read somewhere that spittle would crack as it hit the ground at fifty degrees below. But there was a sharp little sound almost under his nose, and he stood still for a second. It had cracked in the air! What did that mean? Nanook looked up at him gravely. . . .

If such trimmings as these be provided the plainest of plain stories will content us. But does it really matter so little whether one loses one's toes or whether one doesn't? Mrs. Gaunt's heroes seem to shed them as light-heartedly as the Pobbles.

Mr. Dion Clayton Calthrop had chosen a happy title for the finest, best assorted tales contained in 'A Bit at a Time.' One cannot see the play for the chocolate box, but he must be a sweet-toothed reader who does not quarrel with the quality of the sweets, or who does not find the row of war-time specialities positively nauseating. Here is a small 'humorous' sample from the diary of an American airman:

> If I'd found a Hun then I'd have boiled him alive in bread sauce and trussed him with red-hot skewers, tied him down to a white ants' nest and put a jug of water out of his reach.

Another shake of the box produces the war-time bride:

> If you had put a pink rosebud to bed in silk handkerchiefs and put golden foam for hair, and a crumpled leaf for a hand, you could get nothing fairer.

It is the confectioner's mystery that, though the one should be so hard and the other so soft, the flavour of both these samples is identical.

(*April 2, 1920.*)

TWO MODERN NOVELS

An Imperfect Mother . . . By J. D. Beresford
Two Sisters . . . . . By R. H. Bretherton

Mr. Beresford and Mr. Bretherton, two of our more thoughtful writers, turning from the crowded noisy town where everybody knows everybody else, and there is not a house to be had

or even a room that is bare of associations, turning equally from the vague outlines and spaces of the open country, have chosen to build their new novels in what might be called the Garden City of literature. It is only recently that the possibilities and the attractions of this desirable site have been discovered by the psychoanalysts, and the houses are still scattered and few, but there is no doubt as to its dawning popularity with the novelists. They do not seem to mind the chill hygienic atmosphere of a Garden City; the gardens in which poor Adam and Eve never could find a hiding-place from the awful eye of God or man; the asphalt roads with meek trees on either side standing up, as it were, to an 'artistic' dance; the wire receptacles ready to catch the orange or banana peel of some non-resident savage, and the brand-new exposed houses which seem to breathe white enamel and cork linoleum and the works of Freud and Jung, which seem to defy you to find in them a dark corner or a shadowy stair, which seem to promise you that there never shall be a book upside down on the shelves or an unclaimed tooth-brush in the bathroom, or a big summer hat — belonging to whom? — on the top of the wardrobe, or a box under the bed. All is 'carefully thought out,' 'arranged for,' all is in admirable order, and we imagine Mr. Beresford and Mr. Bretherton throwing open the doors of their new houses and declaring them ready for inspection. . . .

'An Imperfect Mother' is an account of the youth and early manhood of Stephen Kirkwood, a pleasant, diligent boy whose ambition is to be a successful builder. His father is a bookseller; he has two sisters, one with spectacles and one without, and his imperfect mother is an artist. She plays the piano, she has a charming talent for telling little stories, and she is — we are told — gay, laughing, beautiful in a way that shocks the staid cathedral city of Medboro'. Up to the time the story opens she and Stephen have been, it is suggested, all in all to each other, but

now she has fallen in love with the organist and her heart is divided. Stephen, too, smiled upon by the fourteen-year-old Margaret Weatherby, feels the stirring of a new affection, and thus it happens that when his mother puts his loyalty to a final test he fails her and she runs away from home. It is only later that we realize the significance of the scene when Stephen follows her, begs her to come back — and she laughs. Her cruel, hysterical laughter shocks him profoundly, and she lets him go.

Seven years pass and Stephen, highly successful in the building trade, is sent up to London to supervise a £150,000 job on the Embankment. There, in his loneliness, he seeks out his mother, and relations of a kind are renewed. But at the very moment of their meeting Margaret Weatherby reappears and again smiles. . . . There is a repetition of the old conflict under a new guise. This mother, again on the point of running away, turns to him; but this time he is in love, and this time when he shows his heart to Margaret, she it is who laughs hysterically, cruelly. This is not to be borne, and in Stephen's despair he flings the problem at his mother. Why does he mind so much? Now we have the explanation. She remembers how when he was 'a little bit of a toddling thing' he had got into one of his rages with her, and she had laughed, wildly, hysterically, cruelly, until he banged his head against the wall to stop her and had 'a kind of fit.' This has left a dark place in his mind, and it is this that accounts for his extreme susceptibility to callous laughter. . . . But, continuing the explanation, she tells him that the second time she laughed it was a sign of her despair. 'I couldn't keep you off. That laugh was the best effort to defend myself.' And — doesn't he now see that Margaret's laughter had the same meaning? He does, and his imperfect mother brings them together, even though she realizes that in so doing she loses Stephen for ever. But has she ever had him? Mr. Beresford does

not allow us one single glimpse of their life together, in the early days, and in the 'seven years after' meeting there is not a trace of real emotion. At his mother's demand to know why he wanted to know her we are told Stephen 'plunged into essentials.' This is a very cold plunge and, as far as we can see, a useless one. He brings nothing from the vasty deep. And does that explanation, which is intended, evidently, to warm and light up the whole pale book, do anything more than reveal its essential emptiness? The house is not furnished at all; nobody lives there. We should not be surprised if Mr. Beresford had written 'To Let' on the last page. . . .

In the opening chapters of 'Two Sisters' the temperature is still depressingly low. There were two sisters; one was Ethel and one was Nell. Ethel was very, very good, but a prig; Nell was very, very bad and painted her face and waved at soldiers in passing trains, but she was not a prig. Ethel was married to Jim, a very architectural architect, and a modern house with all conveniences, but Nell was not married. 'Oh, Nell, why are you so wicked?' 'Don't bother me, Ethel!' 'You must not talk to Ethel like that,' says Jim. This goes on for a long time. Then the father of the two sisters loses all his money, and Nell goes away to start a music school and so help to keep her parents in their old home, but Ethel refuses to help them because they will not give up the old home. 'Can Ethel be a little cold-hearted?' thinks Jim, and is ashamed of the thought. Nell, finding herself with a Bohemian brother and sister for partners, discovers that she is not really fond of wickedness. She turns over a new leaf and becomes, in no time, a pattern young woman. But when her female partner decamps and leaves her alone in the house with Leonard, Ethel interferes.

Up to this point we have been led so gently and by such easy stages, that it is surprising to find Mr. Bretherton means to make an example of that priggish Ethel. Virtuous matron that

she is, she refuses to believe in Nell's transformation, and after accusing her of living in sin, because the same roof sheltered her and Leonard, Ethel ruins her sister's character by making her accusations public. To the pure all things are impure, and poor Nell has only to return home, ill and shattered as a result of Ethel's campaign, for the virtuous sister to diagnose her illness as 'going to have a baby.' Oh, how the reader hates Ethel when she makes her discovery known to her mother and to the family doctor, and how disappointed he is when the doctor lets Ethel off so lightly after all! Even Jim, the architect, when he appreciates the full extent of his wife's guilt, is not really angry. He could not be angry. There is, as it were, no place for him to be angry in. The author himself is in the same dilemma. Having placed Ethel in the Garden City and the modern house, he must, at all costs, keep her within bounds. And so we find ourselves positively ashamed of our little spurt of rage and only too ready to believe that Ethel will learn to be — not more charitable in future — but a great deal more careful!

(*April 9, 1920.*)

BUTTERFLIES

The Black Curtain . . . . By Douglas Goldring

If we may know an author by the books he writes we should not hesitate in saying that Mr. Douglas Goldring's hobby, enthusiasm and passion is collecting superficialities. He is revealed in 'The Black Curtain' as an ardent and highly successful hunter. For there are displayed in its pages not only all the 'common' ones — particularly large, fine specimens in an excellent state of preservation — but a complete set of those superficial opinions and ideas which enjoyed a brief flutter in the art circles of London between the years 1913 and 1920. These

are the cream of the collection, and although we remember seeing them in a cloud over Chelsea, over Bloomsbury, over Soho, it does not lessen our astonishment that the author should have captured them so successfully, pinned them down, made of them such a great, brave show. His characters are compact of them.

Here is the Russian revolutionary, with the blue eyes of a child and the short black beard of a fanatic, crushing strength, crushing sweetness out of his violin, talking of the earth as 'my mother's breast,' crying the stranger 'friend,' appearing and disappearing in the Russian way we have learned to accept, making the discovery — and announcing it — that human beings are like sheep, their true leaders are shepherds and their enemies may be compared to wolves, and plucking out of the air at the appropriate moment that steaming glass of tea with a slice of lemon floating in it. It says much for the superficiality of the hero, Philip Kane, writer, cosmopolitan, a little weary of Barcelona and Madrid, Vienna and Paris, that he should be at first glance entirely overwhelmed by Ivan Smirnoff. Years of foreign travel, loneliness, wrestling with and overcoming 'inward dissatisfaction,' and the development of 'that rich inner life in which alone there was peace' had left him unprepared for the encounter. They might have met in the Oxford train rather than the funicular from Tibidabo. . . . Is it not strange that a 'citizen of the world' who 'was, he felt, equipped at all points for the battle to preserve his own freedom against the world's encroachments,' who believed in the ideal of human brotherhood, who was 'rid of many early prejudices,' should on the occasion of that meeting with Smirnoff 'first, dimly, realize that the common people who worked with hand and brain were not quite so contented as, to the careless eye, they looked'?

But Mr. Goldring is very tender to his hero and does not seem to find it strange at all; he leads him out of the wilderness,

via Paris, into the heart of London. The time has come, we are given to understand, when Philip Kane must *live*. 'He was filled with the impatience of the trained athlete eager to be put to the test' . . . Anne Drummond, her bobbed head bent over two boxes with the word 'Fuller's' printed on them, is the first human being he meets among the tiresome would-be Bohemians. When the absurd pictures are handed round she looks up with a grin and says she likes peppermint creams best. But at heart she is a Socialist, an internationalist, a scarlet revolutionary, desperately sincere, spontaneous, 'with a hint of fresh sexuality,' longing to live for the people, to dedicate her life to the Cause, to go to the Venetian Ball, to smoke cigarettes. No wonder he finds her a 'joyous enigma.'

> Holy matrimony and the toddling feet of a bevy of little strangers? Heaven forbid. The snare was too obvious.

And so they love and are happy, except for those intervals when Philip ponders over the idea of 'that monstrous figure round which the London pleasure-maniacs revolved . . . that invisible altar on which they were pouring their libations of dry Monopole. When would the great idol become thirsty again for a salt and crimson wine?' This, *bien entendu,* is the cue for the Great War, and he stalks on while Philip calls him 'humbug' and points the finger of scorn at indifferent England. But Anne is tossed to the monster, and the end of it all finds Smirnoff and our hero contemplating the 'red Dawn — cold, terrible, relentless, but bearing with it the promise of the new day.' If the reader shuts his eyes at this point he will have no trouble in imagining the last superficiality.

> 'Come, my friend,' said Smirnoff . . . 'let us rest now, for we must work.'

(*April 16, 1920.*)

KENSINGTONIA

A Remedy against Sin . . . . By W. B. Maxwell

The author who sets out deliberately to write a novel with a purpose must content himself with being a little less than an artist, a little more than a preacher. To accept life, and by thus accepting it to present us with the problem — that is not his chief concern. He is the brilliant lawyer who is bound to look at life from the point of view of his case — who cannot therefore afford to inquire into the evidence that would make the guilty less guilty, or, always with the success of his case in mind, to despise the ridiculous excess of painting the lily and throwing a perfume on the violet.

In 'A Remedy against Sin' Mr. W. B. Maxwell has chosen to obscure his talents under a wig and gown that he may deliver a tremendous attack against the monstrous injustice of our present divorce laws. His description of the 'typical' upper-middle-class family, of which the heroine, Clare, is the younger daughter, is very skilful and amusing. As we read of old Mrs. Gilmour drifting through her large, desirable family residence, always looking for something, or wondering what she has lost or forgotten or ought to have remembered; as we encounter full-blown Emily, the married daughter with the hard laugh and chaffing ways, and all the various members down to Clare, the young girl, just 'out,' whom nobody wants — who fits in nowhere, we feel it could hardly be better done. It is an admirably painted portrait of what we might call an old-fashioned modern family. Then comes the adventurer, Roderick Vaughan, who makes up his mind to win Clare, and because she is lonely and vaguely unhappy and feels herself unwanted, he succeeds to the extent of her running away from home one afternoon and putting herself under his protection. The young man, trading upon

the family sense of honour and horror of anything approaching a scandal, plays his cards so cleverly that they are forced to acknowledge him and to arrange for a fashionable wedding, even though he is almost a complete stranger and they know nothing of his past or his present and ignore the fact that he is vulgar, ill-bred and loud. Now, of course, comes the awakening for the poor heroine, and Mr. Maxwell spares her nothing. She is married to a beast, a bully, a torturer, and there is no escape. Up to this point we must admit that 'A Remedy against Sin' is a great deal better than the majority of novels. The character of Roderick Vaughan — his disposition, which is, as it were, a series of bounds and rebounds — the whole temper and feeling of the book, place it far above the average. But then, more or less suddenly, we are conscious of the purpose.

Clare, from being an innocent, rather charming creature, changes into a martyr; she disappears, and is from henceforth a soft cheveril conscience, submissive to her lord, boundlessly forgiving, less than the dust, in fact, beneath his chariot wheels. We cannot imagine a more effectual goad to a bold bad man than the sight of so great meekness. The purpose becomes dreadfully clear. There is a child — of course there is a child — delicate, tender, born to wring our hearts and die. And as the book sets, the shadow of the Divorce Court grows larger and larger, darker and darker. Of course, the case is defended. Women of England — ye who have the vote — of course Roddy wins, and there is naught for the lily-white, white-as-snow Clare but to go out into the dark, a branded woman, with her innocent friend, a ruined man, at her side.

But — hold! Why did Clare's family let her marry the man? Why, having married, did she submit? Which was her greater tragedy — the loss of her innocence or seeing her name in the newspapers? And if the opinion of the lady shoppers in Sloane Street mattered so awfully — what was her worth? Why, when

the case was decided against her, did not her strong, splendid friend say: 'Look here, darling, if people are so vile, let's go away and leave them to their vileness and be gloriously happy together?' Instead of which, she pinned on an hysterical hat and raved about being his mistress and 'they went out into the darkness hand in hand.' It is 1920, ladies and gentlemen! If we must have a novel with a purpose, let our novelist remember. Let him send them into the light hand in hand — with Kensington behind them for ever!

(*April 23, 1920.*)

ALMS

The Marbeck Inn . . . . By Harold Brighouse
Lighting-up Time . . . . By Ivor Brown

No, no; our case is not really as desperate as this great number of authors would seem to believe. We are not standing on the back-door step with an empty bag, ready for anything as you may care to part with, sir; we are not sitting at the window of the dead drawing-room, wondering whether the couple on the opposite pavement is engaged or married or likely to be engaged and married. It is true that we have a lean and hungry look, but, oh, that our sympathetic entertainers would realize it is not to be changed by the crusts and the leavings they are so boundlessly willing to bestow! Nothing will satisfy us but to be invited as guests to the whole rich banquet — but to feel that our host is, for the wonderful time, our new discovered and yet mysterious friend.

We open novel after novel, we turn page after page, and there are the authors rummaging in dusty cupboards, turning over heaps of discarded garments to find something to fling at us; but our pity for their misguided impulse is shot with suspicion at the sight of so much cheerfulness. Can it be — is it possible

that they are enjoying themselves? We can understand the noble satisfaction derived from the performance of an act of charity, but the confidence, the buoyancy, the assurance which is the keynote of these novels is different and tempts us to cry, 'Danger.' It is so fatally easy, in giving away what one does not need, to delude oneself that the gift really, after all, is no mean one — to find as one brings it into the light and dusts it down and hands it over a quite surprising freshness and newness. How otherwise are we to account for the 'air' with which Mr. Brighouse and Mr. Ivor Brown present their heroes, Sam Branstone of 'The Marbeck Inn' and Peter Penruddock of 'Lighting-up Time'?

Now Sam Branstone was the son of a railway porter and a strong, silent mother. He lived in a mean street in the city of Manchester. In Chapter I. we are told how, through his saving a boy's life, the father of the rescued boy gives Sam his first start in life by sending him to the Grammar School. He is ambitious, and his mother is ambitious for him.

> You are to picture Anne, with her forty years of a working woman's life behind her, wrestling with algebra and trigonometry, blazing a trail for Sam to follow. It was heroic, and by some mental freak, successful. . . . Day after day, in the intervals of cooking, cleaning, washing, she studied the text-books which so puzzled him. . . . She had no education in particular, nothing but a general capacity and a monstrous will. . . .

So with his mother's aid he succeeds at school, and leaves to enter the office of an estate agent.

> Meantime, he grew in knowledge of the world, and education came to Sam, not in the cloistered freedom of the Isis, but where in Manchester he went collecting rents. . . . His

eye for the main chance had always a useful squint which could see money round the corner as well as on the straight high road. . . .

In course of time Sam falls in love with Ada, 'whose intimate clothing was flannelette,' and marries her against his mother's will. He makes money by scoring off persons, institutions and things, and finally owns a publishing business. The mud of Manchester, we are told, is thick upon him. Enter Effie, a real woman who determines to save him, to rid him of the mud and to reveal him a sparkling Sam, which she accomplishes by taking him away with her to the Marbeck Inn, sacrificing herself to him, and making him bathe in pools and rivers and tarns and all places where water is, that the physical act of cleansing may be unto him a symbol. She succeeds, but not before there has been a struggle between the lawful wife of Sam and his mother, who reappears upon the scene to wrestle with more complicated algebraical problems. And the end is Marbeck Inn again with the prospect of an infant Samuel.

'There you are. That's Sam. That's Sammy Branstone for you,' cries Mr. Brighouse, handing us this lifeless figure in a frock coat with a moustache that droops over his mouth. 'And there's Anne. There's Sam's mother. There's a woman for you,' he declares, setting down before us a pair of elastic-sided boots, an umbrella and a black bonnet. But his generosity does not stop at that. He goes on measuring yard upon yard of Manchester goods until—we had rather go empty-handed away than burdened with such a parcel.

Mr. Ivor Brown's charitable dole takes the form of a theatrical novel. It tells how Peter Penruddock took pity on Mary Maroon, an actress whose success was on the wane, and engaged himself as her advance agent for a tour in the provinces. We have no doubt, of course, that the tour is going to be a remarkable suc-

cess, owing to the remarkable ingenuity of Peter. There will be occasional setbacks: Monday nights which are 'frosty,' little difficulties among the company, occasional displays of the familiar theatrical jealousy, and so on. We are not in the least surprised when a Lord appears on the scene, but we are mildly surprised at his immense importance in the author's eyes. There is also an Honourable Cynthia who has had a family scrap with her papa and is come to Peter for a job.

> 'I wasn't constructed for use. You see, I was educated at a most frightfully expensive school. . . . I believe it cost hundreds to get through the doors. . . .'
>
> 'Did you get your money's worth?'
>
> 'I learned comportment,' she said, and, putting her legs against the fireplace, lit another cigarette.
>
> 'Not a blue stocking then?'
>
> 'No, black milanese. Of course the price is awful, but then the cheap ones ladder straight away.'

Here is a typical example of Mr. Brown's humour. After sampling it the reader will not be surprised to know he makes play with tinned salmon and boarding-house ham and a bottle of stout, and that there is a comic lift-boy and . . .

But enough. Were we the beggars that these authors and their kind suppose us to be, we should not weep and make our moan for what we lack, but for what is ungrudgingly, unblushingly thrust upon us.

(*April 30, 1920.*)

MRS. HUMPHRY WARD'S LAST NOVEL

Harvest . . . . . By Mrs. Humphry Ward

If we attempt to analyse the feeling of respect with which we regard the large body of conscientious work produced by Mrs.

Humphry Ward, we find that it springs from the fact that the angel who handed her the pen was never other than the 'stern daughter of the voice of God.' She recognized the problems with which her generation was faced; she felt it was her duty so to state, so to explain those problems that men and women who were thrown into confusion at the thought of strange ideas and theories escaping from their cages and running loose in society should be comforted and calmed by the spectacle of many a noble man, many a gracious lady bringing them to heel, teaching them to bear harness and to carry them up heights too steep for the pedestrian, too narrow for the easy carriage.

In her early novels and in those of her prime we are never for a page unconscious of the deliberate task which she has set herself; the plot, the story, is the least important thing. What is important is the messages that her characters have to deliver; she sees herself, we fancy, as the person at the great house, receiving these messages and translating them to the eager, inquiring crowd about the gates, and then — returning to the library. For who can imagine Mrs. Humphry Ward away from that decorous apartment, that discreet and dignified room with its heavy door shutting out the unmeasured tones of existence, its high windows letting in the pale light of the English country? Here she interviewed Life, polished and agreeable Life, with an intellectual brow, an easy carriage, thoughtful eyes; ardent, rebellious Life, Diana in a plumed hat ready to die for the Cause; timid, under-fed Life, coughing behind a thread glove; and honest, stupid Life, twisting a cap, grinning and the table with its papers and pens. One by one, or so many of them together in a prearranged order, the figures enter, yield the information they are expected to yield and depart, or are, more properly, removed, conducted, seen off the premises, with a quiet firm sentence or two. . . .

But the inaudible and noiseless foot of Time passed and re-

passed, and the problems which had seemed to her so worth the solving seemed to dissolve, and with them her intense intellectual efforts. With the disappearance of the rich difficulties came the unbaring of the plot. She seemed to see how weak it was, how scarcely it held, and her later books rely upon the story. They are failures for this reason. She had no idea of what happened to those people when they had left the library; her imagination was poor — her sympathy did not extend beyond a kind of professional sympathetic interest.

The modern world came streaming through the library, making all sorts of strange demands, ceaseless, careless, changing even as she watched it. And the spectacle of the no longer youthful, of the woman tired and unflagging, trying to keep pace with the mood of the moment, is not without pathos.

She cannot be judged by 'Harvest.' It is a plain mystery novel; it bears the impress of her desire to emerge from the library and to walk in the cornfields — in the new land which is wartime England. But she is unhappy in such surroundings, and her serenity is gone.

(*May 7, 1920.*)

PRESSED FLOWERS

A Lost Love . . . . . By Ashford Owen

This little book was first published in 1854. In the monograph which precedes it we are told by the author how she was not above the age of twenty-four when she wrote it, and how it brought her famous friends and fame. Browning, Tennyson and Swinburne she kindled; as to the Carlyles, she gives us not only a glimpse of them 'at home' — was ever a couple more spied upon? — but a view of Carlyle, alone, in the South of France, standing, as it were, in flowery fields, in the shadow of lemon

trees, and shaking his fist at the bare mountains — 'those starved pantries.' If 'A Lost Love' had been a gentle carrying on of the monograph, if it had been permitted us to go on turning over the author's album, listening to her account of where the sprig of holly was pulled, and who was by when she gathered the aster, we should have found it more beguiling than the formal, rather dark little novel which kind hands have brought into the light again.

It is pleasant to think of the grave young girl choosing a pen to her liking, sitting down in her grave young way, and steeling herself for the great moment when the hero, brilliant and flashing creature, asks his affianced bride whether she cannot yet make up her mind to call him by his Christian name; it is pleasant, but the pleasure is a trifle pale. We read of the uncomfortable house where Georgy Sandon lived and made brown-holland covers for her nagging aunt, and went on a visit to a house where she met the most perfect man who ever took a young girl down to dinner; we read of how she ran away to London and was found by that same young man outside a pastrycook's, where she had been for a glass of water, and of how he carried her to his mother's house, where she begged most pitifully to be allowed to go to Brighton before she swooned away. And while we follow the course of their loves we realize that 'it is not to be.' The charmer whose letter has never reached James Erskine reappears and Georgy makes the supreme renunciation. We are not spared her pining away and dying, leaving James Erskine's only present to her to his little daughter; we are not spared the child's running up to her papa to show the bright thing and his touching the fair curls while memories . . . memories. . . .

These are pressed flowers: the fashion for them is no more. They are not to be laughed at or condemned, but we have too little time to languish over them. Nevertheless, now and again,

when Miss Ashford Owen forgot how solemn a thing it is to be a writer and to know all there is to know about Love and Death, she gives us a delicious little scene, as when Constance Everett runs up and down the passage in her ravishing little nightcap.

(*May 7, 1920.*)

MR. MACKENZIE'S TREAT

The Vanity Girl . . . . By Compton Mackenzie

We will not deny that we have had our doubts before. We have imagined that too many pastries went in at the door and too much conversation came out of the window; but with 'The Vanity Girl' there can scarcely be more than one mind about the matter — Mr. Compton Mackenzie has set the pot boiling and invited all the flappers in the United Kingdom to tea. It is not so easy at any time to make the pot boil, even when the author is content with a delicate crackle or two, a handful of sparks, a jet of quick flame — and the whole ending in half-a-dozen bubbles and a plume of waving steam. But here's a great 'wessel' filled with heavy cream and slow-melting chocolate slabs, and here's, while they slowly dissolve, such a spread of pastry and general jamminess and stickiness that 'tis a sight, as Betsy might declare, 'to make the Evings themselves look down!' Nothing is missing; we hardly dare think how those mock appetites will be gorged, or of what Mr. Mackenzie, with his talent extraordinary for producing chocolate-pot boilers, will have left to put upon the table next time.

It was our fortune some time ago to overhear the following conversation:

'Is that a new one, dear?'

'Well, yes, dear, I suppose it is.'

'How far have you got, dear?'

'Chapter twenty-seven.'

'Make room, dear; let's read the synopsis.'

'Oh, that's not new, dear. That's just the same as usual.'

The heroine of Mr. Mackenzie's novel is too beautiful for words — hair, teeth, ankles, figure, style — all are perfect. Her mother is meek, her father is horrid; she is the eldest of a family of nine, and they live in the wilds — Oh, those wilds — of West Kensington. We are told that Norah is clever, but she is not real enough to be clever; perhaps she has a little maid — Pert, Sly, — call her what you will, who is willing to do the answering back, and the getting on. Her friend Lily's mother — who has 'a complexion like a field of clover seen from a passing train' and 'a coiffure like a tinned pineapple' — dies, so Lily is free to go on the stage with Norah. On page 54 Lily and Norah, whose stage name is Dorothy Lonsdale, find themselves in the train from Manchester to Birmingham, and Sylvia Scarlett is in the same carriage with them. Oh, what a surprise for Mr. Mackenzie's readers! However, it is Dorothy's book this time, and not Sylvia's. Soon, beautifully soon, they arrive at Oxford, and there is the tall young man 'whose immediately conspicuous feature was a pair of white flannel trousers down the seams of which ran stripes of vivid blue; but when he was introduced to Dorothy as Lord Clarehaven she forgot about his trousers in the more vivid blue of his name.' We are given almost four whole pages of Debrett to blow our excitement into flame, and then Dorothy goes back to London and makes a new friend, Olive, and the two share a flat in Half-Moon Street which is provided for them by a very great man of high rank, who does not make love to them, but likes to have a little simple girlish gaiety to turn to when he gets tired of . . . Buckingham Palace. And then Clarehaven returns, and Olive puts into Dorothy's head the amazing notion that he might marry her. '"But why not?"

thought Dorothy in bed that night. "He's independent . . . Countess of Clarehaven," she murmured. . . . The title took away her breath . . . and it seemed as if the very traffic of Piccadilly paused in the presence of a solemn mystery.'

Of course, after the usual trouble, she marries him, and is in no time the idol of his family, of the ancient villagers, retainers, and the M.F.H. We have a sample of every kind of delicious triumph a young girl from West Kensington could dream of, to Tony in pink silk pyjamas and Dorothy 'in a *déshabille* of peach bloom,' and for background the dark panelled walls. The coming of the child provides a very orgy of emotion, even to . . . 'The grace and beauty with which she expressed her state [compared with most women] was that of a seedling daffodil beside a farrowing sow.' And then the confinement, and the child is born dead, and the husband turns gambler and gives up the cards for horses, and loses all, and she has a miscarriage, and he goes to the war and is killed, and she finds herself with child again, and this time all is well, and she marries the man who had always loved her and had purchased Clarehaven from her husband. . . .

In whatever contempt Mr. Mackenzie may hold his public—how is it possible that he should dare to invite them to partake of such sickly food? We should not waste space upon so pretentious and stupid a book were it not that we have believed in his gifts and desire to protest that he should so betray them.

(*May 14, 1920.*)

A WOMAN'S BOOK

The Book of Youth . . . . By Margaret Skelton

'The Book of Youth' is one of those novels which appear from time to time and set the critic wondering what it is in its essential quality that makes him feel so impatient on the one hand and so anxious to deal gently with it on the other. We are impatient

with its sentimentality, its quaint, impossible views of the relationships between man and woman, and its determination that through woman only the wicked world will be saved. We find very hard to bear this trick of simplifying everything, not by making clear, but by family blurring — not by taking away, but by adding to. And is it easy to tolerate the author's love for her heroine? — that soft boundless love which sees everything about her glorious, and almost makes us feel that no one woman should ever see another woman cry. We have remarked, in these novels, that the hero is never over-strong. He is an artist, in most cases — a poet, a musician, a painter — and he is pale, with 'queer' eyes, easily pleased, easily hurt — a child. We would put our hand upon our heart and swear that he has a tragic, humorous mouth.

For all that, it is difficult to remain cold before the author's enthusiasm. This is her book, these are her people; she is having, as it were, so much the time of her life in describing it all that our withers are wrung at the thought of saying a too-unkind word. If 'The Book of Youth' had been half as short; if Miss Margaret Skelton had been content with lakes instead of seas, and storms that threatened rather than broke; if Monica had possessed more of a sense of humour and less of a bubbling laugh — why, then it would not have been 'The Book of Youth.' Many thoughts great and small are stalking through the land. We are informed by the cultivated minds of our day that this is no time for artists. Unless a man is willing to sell his soul he will never have the wherewithal to feed and clothe his poor body. We are told also that we are on the eve of a literary renascence. True, no star has been seen in the sky, but the roads are thronged with shepherds. This is the moment of attention. There never has been such a curious hour, when to-day is not. There was yesterday — there may be to-morrow, but we are assured that is as much as any man dare say.

But Miss Margaret Skelton and her sister writers will go on producing longer and longer books of their kind, with many a serious chapter in them about sex and social evils, and slumland, and 'the storm that broke over Europe,' for ever and ever.

(*May 14, 1920.*)

A JAPANESE NOVEL

An Adopted Husband. Translated from the Japanese of Futabatei by B. Mitsiu and Gregg M. Sinclair

The introduction to this charming novel seems to have been written with the express purpose of assuring us that it is a very serious work of art and that, whatever absurd eggshell notions we may have of life in Japan, they will be broken for ever by this presentation of modern Japanese domesticity. It is even suggested that the problem stated is not by any means unlike one of our own. . . . There is at any rate a jealous wife, a weak husband, an annoying mother-in-law, a stupid servant, and a very gentle lovely girl who is the wife's sister and, fatally for her own and the husband's peace of mind, lives with this family. But there, it seems to us, the resemblance ends — if it has ever really existed. For the persons of the story are caught in the delicate net that is flung over their lives and are only seen through its meshes. Their loves, their sufferings, their jealousy and their anger are all somehow exquisite, touched with faëry, and wonderfully, beautifully remote from the commonplace complications of our London and provincial novelists. Consider, for instance, Tetsuya, coming home from his lecturing at the University and being met by his sister-in-law.

She caught sight of him, put her lamp by her side, placed her delicate hands on the floor, the muslin-delaine sleeves

hugging her forearms, and bowed her head; a ribbon of some colour indistinguishable at night fluttered; and her decidedly fair neck appeared through the screen of some back hair. She said, 'I am glad to have you home again.'

It were impossible not to become deeply enamoured of this exquisite little creature, Sayo-Ko, and there is in the description of her love for Tetsuya a grace, a lightness of touch, as though the author were afraid of her vanishing under his pen. And poor little Tetsuya, so cruelly treated by his wife and mother-in-law, plays the lover with a kind of awkward grace which makes us smile as though he were a doll. What could be more delicious than the description of their first meeting in the little 'room of six mats' above a shop that he has taken for her?

He entered the store, saying 'Pardon me.'

The landlady with good sense called from the bottom of the stairs, 'Miss, he's come.' She then stepped aside and Tetsuya began to climb; it was not an easy task. . . . 'Please be careful,' said the landlady, from below.

'All right . . .' But his posture did not look at all right. He reached the top with great difficulty, and found waiting at the entrance of the room — Sayo-ko.

Later, they decide to go out for the evening.

'To-day let us return to our school-days and have whole-hearted fun.'

Sayo-ko was pinning her plush shawl with a butterfly buckle. She smiled. 'All right; I will be a romping girl.'

'Romping?' Tetsuya exclaimed, in a sudden flush of joy. 'Capital. If you will be a romping girl I will be' — he could not find a corresponding word — 'I will be riotous.'

The temptation to quote from 'An Adopted Husband' is very great, but it is not fair to a novel which is, like so few of our English novels, seen as a whole, and then worked out — so we gain the impression — with deliberate and fastidious care. We could not for the life of us take the tragic happenings tragically — and perhaps we are not meant to, for the author keeps putting little touches as though he too smiled at the little creatures who were caught in such an unpleasant storm, whirled about, so cruelly separated and sent flying in all directions. But let us not convey the impression that 'An Adopted Husband' is not a serious work of art — it is. But after a long rolling on the heavy seas of our modern novels the critic feels as though he had stepped into a blue paper boat and was sailing among islands whose flowery branches overhang the water.

(*May 21, 1920.*)

AN ENIGMA

Passion . . . . . By Shaw Desmond

Well, if the truth were known — are we not curious about everybody we meet? What do we mean when we say that he or she does not interest us? 'A bore, a frightful bore, I shouldn't care if I never set eyes on him again.' But how many of us would run away if the rejected one suddenly proposed to tell us what he had never before told anybody — the real, true story of his life? . . . We are wary, aloof, and on our guard — Heaven forfend we should be heard crying, like Whitman, 'Passing stranger, you do not know how longingly I look upon you' — nevertheless human beings, ever mysterious and strange, are our passion. . . .

One might turn to us and say: 'What a feast you must have nowadays, when every third book that is written is a confession!'

And every author who does confess is consumed with the desire to leave nothing untold — to take us over the house of his being as it was in the beginning and is now, without any preparations that might create in our minds a false impression of orderliness or comfort.

Here is Mr. Shaw Desmond, for instance, simply determined, we feel, from the very first paragraph, to let nothing of importance pass. From the moment he cut his 'pringling' teeth — in his grandmother's blue-veined hand — we shall have the whole of him. We shall brood with him over the time when he was not long out of tartan frocks and 'his mind was virgin; ductile; expansive; fluid to the impress of the Power beyond.' He will have us cry with him: 'Why did it change? Why should sclerosis infiltrate the soul-arteries as Time, the silter, the cramper, the definer, does his work?' Why? Why? These questions go running through the book, losing their way, for certain, were it not for the three main passages into which they are directed — passages and sets of chambers which Mr. Shaw Desmond inhabits one after the other and which are called Love and Money and Power.

For according to our author it is not possible to tell a human story unless one adopts some such system of division. The whole house cannot be occupied at once; some rooms are bound to be shuttered and dark while the others are in use. He almost asks us, in fine, to forget their existence, while we make our prodigious, solemn rummage in those of the moment. The result is depressing in the extreme. We feel as though we have been conducted over a house wherein three young gentlemen of promise have been attacked by, dreadfully suffered from, and finally died of three youthful complaints. There is not a black pin to choose between their agonies, but — alas the day! — why are they recorded by the author with such dark and fearful relish? Even in the moments of more or less relief, when the poor

three-in-one hero very shakily takes the air, apes lurk behind the innocent trees, and girls with the paint dripping on their cheeks in 'encarmined lines.'

'Passion' fails for the reason that so many of these novels of confession fail. Our curiosity about human beings, our longing to know the story of their lives springs from the desire to 'place' them, to see them in their relation to Life as we know it. But Mr. Shaw Desmond and his fellows are under the illusion that they must isolate the subject and play perpetual showman. He has the key, the inventory, the plan for everything. 'Turn to the right, Ladies and Gentlemen, and you will observe me at the age of sixteen "battling with the after-appetite" and dashing out "nefariously into the powdery face and black humorous eyes of Mr. Belomo . . . to . . . spend a whole sixpence on a madeira cake."' To your left you have me 'haunted by the sex-shadows that Sherlingham had sterilized' . . . No, the voice is too loud, the gesture too crude. Better a half-truth, beautifully whispered, than a whole so solemnly shouted.

(*May 21, 1920.*)

TWO NOVELS

Madeline of the Desert . . By Arthur Weigall
The Lonely House . . . By Mrs. Belloc Lowndes

Of these two novels the first only is by an inexperienced hand. In the way in which it is written — in its composition — the author has been at no great pains to discover a path that is less trodden than the familiar, popular route. We glance at the opening sentence and read: 'The blazing orb of the Egyptian sun had passed behind the rugged hills of the Western Desert when Father Gregory, tall and gaunt . . .' And then here follows a description of the retreat which he has made for himself

and other souls in need of peace and — enter the heroine, 'beautiful beyond the ordinary conception of beauty,' riding a donkey, smoking a cigarette in a long amber holder, with something of the Russian Hussar, something of the boy and yet something 'essentially feminine' in her appearance. Her white slender hands are like those he has seen in the Florentine paintings of the Madonna. She has, of course, come to tell him the story of her life, while the light changes from gold to grey, the smoke rises from the evening fires, and the shepherds return with their flocks. She is, of course, very naïve, very bitter, very indifferent as to what the end will be. Her mother was an English dancer in a café in Port Said; her father, so they told her, an Irish revolutionary. At sixteen she ran away with a kind man, who, kinder still, died, and left her a fortune. So she came to London, educated herself, played the Magdalene in a pageant, and then drifted — drifted. Now she is sailing down the Nile with an Italian Prince. Why does she tell him all this? Because she has heard him preach in London, because she wants him to look at her as he looked at his congregation then, 'with all that blessedness in your face. Oh, man, don't you see that I'm miserable, miserable? . . .'

This for the hardened reader is a by no means promising beginning. And when, a few days later, the holy man receives a letter from her telling him she intends to commit suicide in Port Said, and we are informed at the same time that his nephew has arrived from England and is occupying a room on the same landing as she; when we are forced to trace his growing fascination for the half-gay, half-tragic girl, which culminates in his rescuing her from the moment of despair when she tries to throw herself over the balcony, and to listen to his 'God sent me to you just in time,' we feel that our worst fears are realized. Here is a new novel that never was new — a new carriage hitched on to the same old engine, making the same

journey, stopping at the same stations and running into the same sunset. But no, this first novel cannot be dismissed so lightly. Under its appearance of superficiality there is a quite unusual and remarkable understanding of the character of Madeline. However absurd it may seem in this workaday world, it is nevertheless true that there are these little delicate creatures who drift through life until they fall in love as she fell in love with the rescuer. She fell in love and she was born again. The description of her relationship with this ordinary, rather stupid young Englishman is entirely convincing. We wish that Mr. Weigall had been content to write their story without introducing the labour party and their absurd, extravagant behaviour. As to Madeline's speechmaking and public appearances — they seem to us irrelevant. In our opinion he should have concentrated on the story of her relationship with Robin and developed the highly amusing character of Daisy Jones. In fact, he should trust himself more and free himself from the idea that a novel is not furnished if it does not contain all the furniture mentioned in all the catalogues.

The case of Mrs. Belloc Lowndes is very different. She belongs to yesterday, and her latest novel is written with such expertness that we feel it were impossible that anything could have been described differently. She has her certain rules; she follows them and she arrives at a certain conclusion. There is something determined and resigned in her manner which reminds us of your carver who has carved chickens for the past — how many — years. There is only one question which suggests itself to the admiring reader. How seriously does she mean us to take these dreadful murders? How shocked are we expected to feel by the spectacle of Lily, that ' delightfully pretty, happy-hearted, simple-natured, old-fashioned English girl,' on her way to the English church and finding her way barred by the decomposing body of a very nice man whom she had dined with only a short

time ago? Whenever incidents of this kind occur, the author has a trick of saying that never in all her life would Lily forget — this or that tragedy of the moment. Wouldn't it be a trifle surprising if she did? The story is simple. Lily is sent to stay with some relations who are not really relations at their villa above Monte Carlo. The household is three in number — Aunt Cossy, the Count, her husband, and an ancient servant, Cristina. From the moment of her arrival we are prepared for the worst, but Lily can face mystery after mystery without having the slightest suspicion that she is living with arch-criminals. Their habit is to invite wealthy men to dinner, give them delicious food, drug them, and then take them off to some quiet spot, shoot and bury them. In this way their son, a young man of fashion in Roman society, is kept supplied with pocket money. If Lily had not gone to stay at the villa, ten to one they would never have been discovered, unless the trio had become so careless about disposing of the bodies that they had left them like fallen fruit under the trees. Their lack of precaution is one of the most entertaining features of the book. For the reader is entertained and thrilled throughout. His suspicions being awakened from the moment the Countess told Lily she could only have a boiled egg and a piece of bread on her arrival, his eyes are big to see something sinister in everything — even in the bath towel with a hole in it that the heroine finds, later, is used for drying the dishes. Perhaps, after all, this discovery, for the modest young girl, is more dreadful than the finding of that dead body.

(*May 28, 1920.*)

LOOKING ON

One after Another . . . . . By Stacy Aumonier

It would seem nowadays that there is some readjustment going on in the general mind between the importance of feeling

and the importance of thought. Was feeling ever simple? We doubt it, and yet we find some of our younger writers looking back upon it as something which it was not impossible to live by in other times, but which, owing to the immense complication of modern existence, has been proved inadequate. They remind us, in fact, dismally enough, of a party of men who realize that unless something is done, and done pretty quickly, they will find themselves winter-bound, ice-bound. So this is no time for feeling; they must think a way out. But what is the use, to your artist at any rate, of thought that is not the outcome of feeling? You must feel before you can think; you must think before you can express yourself. It is not enough to feel and write; or to think and write. True expression is the outcome of them both, yet a third thing, and separate.

'One after Another' is a novel which lies as it were half way between the two. Now it inclines towards feeling, and now towards thought. And so it divides and subdivides. It is rich and poor, cold and hot, dull and deeply interesting. There are moments of fusion, as, for example, the death of Laura, which give us a glimpse of this book as it might have been, and set us wondering what other author to-day is capable of such sincere and powerful work. But the impression of the whole is of something which has just not succeeded.

There are times when Mr. Aumonier's hero reminds us of that strange character in Tchehov's story 'My Life.' He is, in the same way, obedient to Life, and content to be used. Some things move him, and move him profoundly at the time, but the feeling that everything passes is his strongest feeling of all. He begins life as the son of a publican in Camden Town and brother to the famous Laura, a dark, passionate girl who is determined to live, to have a career, to escape from all that she dislikes through music. At the end of his life-story we feel that he is still the son of that simple, living father, that all that has

happened to him has been a kind of prolonged looking-on at the queer people who came and went. But Laura has, in some strange way, become the dark, passionate music in which she desired to lose herself.

(*May 28, 1920.*)

A MODEL STORY

The Third Window . . By Anne Douglas Sedgwick

It takes but a page or two of Mrs. Sedgwick's new book for the reader to be aware that she has chosen to set herself a delicate, difficult task. The form of 'The Third Window' is that of a prolonged short story, and she has divided it into ten parts — ten stages of a story that begins in pale high silvery light and ends in darkness. In the problem the author has chosen, and in her manner of stating it, there is something essentially modern. Indeed, so strongly does the reader feel this that he can hardly imagine it being written yesterday or to-morrow; it is to-day — Spring, 1920. One might even go so far as to say that it is exquisitely, eminently fashionable. But what is our emotion as we lay the book down — what effect has it produced upon us? Has it quickened our perception, or increased our mysterious response to Life? Do we feel that we have partaken of the author's vision — that something has been revealed that we are the richer for having seen? Is there ever one single moment when it seems to us that she herself, for all her careful control, is borne away so that she is as unconscious of her audience as are we of the stage and the setting? . . . The door shuts upon us without a sound; we walk on velvet. There is never a jarring note, or one clash of colour that was not intended. What should be polished is revealed and beautifully spaced; yet is our attention never challenged. So discreet, so watchful is the light that

we play with the idea that it has been captured by the author and made to do her bidding.

Nothing is missing; there are even real flowers, wind-flowers in glasses showing their rosy stems; there is even a sock with the needles left in and a morsel of embroidery lying on a citron-and-white striped chintz chair in this model story. Even without the people the setting is — is it not? — charming, highly civilized, suggesting in all its appointments and perfections a background for a drama in which high reserves will take the place of simple avowals. But here we pause. Here we begin to wonder whether real people could survive these surroundings. We remember finding ourselves in the boudoir of a model flat, and hearing our companion whisper in the voice that is reserved for those occasions: 'No, it won't do, it won't do. If he put down his gloves the whole scheme would come tumbling about their ears. And supposing she took off her hat. . . . The risk — the risk!'

There are three characters in 'The Third Window,' two women and a man. Very carefully Mrs. Sedgwick draws them for us — Antonia, the young war widow, tall, pale and opulent, with the mark on her eyelid that looked like the freaking of some lovely fruit; Bevis, her husband's friend, thin, wasted, one-legged since the war; and Miss Latimer, sister of the dead man, the virgin who will at all costs keep the lamp he treasured so fondly on earth still burning for him and for him alone. The third window is the window that overlooked the flagged paths, the ancient cedar, the white fritillaries planted by Malcolm, and the fountain he loved to stand beside. It was when Antonia confessed her dread of that window and of seeing the ghost of Malcolm there that Bevis asked her to marry him. And the day after she told him fully of her fear that there should be immortality, her fear or her delight — either, both. Bevis 'believes,' and their happiness, which is on the point of dawning, clouds over. Miss Latimer is certain, when Antonia questions her. Finally,

in a queer, half-desperate, half-defiant mood, Antonia persuades them to play at table-turning, and, naturally with Miss Latimer as the medium, the fatal message is rapped out. Two days later, after a long talk with her lover, after Bevis has had a white, blazing, baring scene with Miss Latimer, Antonia kills herself. She cannot face the difficulty. And we have Miss Latimer, like a priest, very content with the sacrifice, and the twice-broken man. . . . Here is a plot, you see, which has great possibilities. There are, if one might say so, the bones of a real problem in such a situation. But we do not think Mrs. Sedgwick has faced it. For all her cleverness and brilliance and faintly exotic vocabulary will not help her to make living, breathing, human beings out of these three portraits to fit a scene. They do fit it; indeed, they are so enveloped and enfolded that the scene and the tragedy close over their heads.

Let us give a small sample of Mrs. Sedgwick's way of writing. Antonia suspects Bevis of seeing in her 'induced emotions.'

> I rather like induced emotions in you. . . . They suit you. They are like the colour of a pomegranate, or the taste of a mulberry, or the smell of a branch of flowering hawthorn; something rich, thick and pleasingly oppressive.

In our opinion this is 'model' conversation as well.

(*June 4, 1920.*)

A SPRINGE TO CATCH WOODCOCKS

Potterism . . . . . By Rose Macaulay

In this new novel by Miss Macaulay it is not only her cleverness and wit which are disarming. It is her coolness, her confidence, her determination to say just exactly what she intends to say whether the reader will or no. We are conscious, while

the dreadful truth escapes us, of a slightly bewildered feeling, of, almost, a sense of pique. After all, what right has the author to adopt this indifferent tone towards us? What is the mystery of her offhand, lightly-smiling manner? But these little, quick, darting fishes of doubt remain far below our surface until we are well into the book; we are conscious of them, and that is all. The rest of us is taken up with the enjoyment of 'Potterism,' with the description of the Potter Press and what it stands for. It is extraordinarily pleasant to have all our frantic and gloomy protestations and furies against 'Potterism' gathered up and expressed by Miss Macaulay with such precision and glittering order — it is as though she has taken all those silly stones we have thrown and replaced them with swift little arrows. 'How good that is, how true!' we exclaim at every fresh evidence of Potterism and every fresh exposure of a Potterite. . . . But then there is her plot to be taken into account. It is very slight. She has simply traced a ring round the most important, the most defined anti-Potterites and Potterites. Potterism is the strongest power that rules England to-day; the anti-Potterites are that small handful of people, including ourselves, whose every breath defies it. And what happens to them? Here those small fishes begin to grow very active, to flirt their fins, flash to the surface, leap, make bubbles. This creates a strange confusion in our minds. For the life of us we can't for the moment see, when all is said and done, which are which. Is it possible that we ourselves are only another manifestation of the disease? Who has won, after all? Who shall say where Potterism ends? It is easy to cry: 'If we must be flung at anything, let us be flung at lions.' But the very idea of ourselves as being flung at anything is an arch-Potterism into the bargain.

(*June 4, 1920.*)

ECHOES

The Tall Villa . . . . . By Lucas Malet

'But I haven't been alone.'

And even this meagre morsel of confession eased; so that there she would, how gladly, have let things rest. For all the encompassing of a thorough and detailed confidence sprang glaringly into evidence directly her cousin made that attemptedly rallying answer: 'Not alone, darling Fan? So very much the better — but how exciting! And who, if I'm not too impertinently inquisitive in asking, was your much-to-be-envied guest?'

'Ah, my dear, if I could tell you,' Frances, after an instant's hesitation, said as she rose, all of a piece, to her feet. . . .

This quotation from 'The Tall Villa,' though nicely typical of the author's latest style of writing is, we assure the reader, a by no means extravagant example. For the first fourteen pages we are not particularly conscious of any peculiarity, but then with a sentence that finishes: 'so that there really remained to her, as means of locomotion, only bus, Underground, the elusive taxi or her own slender, high-instepped feet,' this vague reminiscent perfume, as the author might say, begins to unbottle itself. On page forty-one the odour is become so pungent that we do not know whether to laugh or to cry. The heroine, startled by a sound which she takes for a pistol shot and her husband for a motor tyre, is in his arms. He is observing her eyes which are wide open.

Not as he felt that they foolishly or affectedly stared, least of all stared at him — he could, indeed, have put up with a far larger share of their glances, which were notably exquisite just now to his thinking — but searched, looking through, rather than at, all objects presented to them, as though striving to

wrest an answer, wrest knowledge, from some not readily penetrable medium.

This is the second short novel within the past three weeks which is an experiment in the manner of Henry James, but while Mrs. Sedgwick dipped her pen with a kind of fastidious caution in the outer edge of the illustrious ink-pot, our present author finds restraint extremely difficult. We are not certain even now whether she means us to take her *au grand sérieux*. Her Frances Copley, poor pale lady in her silver and greys, playing the piano every afternoon to the ghost of an exquisite young man who haunts her drawing-room, is far too shadowy to be real, and Charlie Montagu, the bloated monster who has assisted her husband, slapping his thigh and crying 'Congrats,' is immensely too substantial to be anything but a bad caricature. And yet the last page, ending on a note of high tragedy, contains one convincing paragraph which the author could hardly have written if she had not meant us to be carried away.

(*June 11, 1920.*)

A NORWEGIAN NOVEL

Growth of the Soil . . . . . By Knut Hamsun

It is difficult to account for the fact that 'Growth of the Soil,' the latest novel by the famous Norwegian writer, is only the second of his works to be translated into English. Knut Hamsun is no longer young; he has fulfilled his early promise and his reputation is assured, and yet, except for 'Shallow Soil,' which was published some years ago, we have had nothing but the echo of his fame to feed upon. Perhaps this is not wholly lamentable. How often we find ourselves wishing that we had the books of some writer we treasure to read for the first time, and if the novel before us is typical of Knut Hamsun's work —

as we have every reason to believe it is — there is a feast before us. Here, at least, are four hundred and six pages of small type excellently translated, upon which we congratulate the Norwegian publishers and the translator, whose name does not appear.

If 'Growth of the Soil' can be said to have any plot at all — any story — it is the very ancient one of man's attempt to live in fellowship with Nature. It is a trite saying when we are faced with a book which does renew for us the wonder and the thrill of that attempt that never was there a time when its message was more needed. But solitude is no cure for sorrow, and virgin country will not make anyone forget the desolation he has seen. Such a life is only possible for a man like the hero, Isak, a man who has known no other and can imagine none. Nevertheless, there remains in the hearts of nearly all of us an infinite delight in reading of how the track was made, the bush felled, the log hut built, so snug and warm with its great chimney and little door, and of how there were animals to be driven to the long pastures, goats and sheep and a red and white cow. In the opening chapter of 'Growth of the Soil,' Knut Hamsun gives us the picture of an immense wild landscape, and there is a track running through it, and we spy a man walking towards the north carrying a sack.

> This or that, he comes; the figure of a man in this great solitude. He trudges on; bird and beast are silent all about him; now and again he utters a word or two speaking to himself. 'Eyah — well, well . . .' so he speaks to himself. Here and there, where the moors give place to a kindlier spot, an open space in the midst of the forest, he lays down the sack and goes exploring; after a while he returns, heaves the sack on his shoulders again, and trudges on. So through the day, noting time by the sun; night falls, and he throws himself down on the heather, resting on one arm. . . .

The man is Isak. It is extraordinary, how, while we follow him in his search for the land he wants, the author gives us the man. His slowness and simplicity, his immense strength and determination, even his external appearance, short, sturdy, with a red beard sticking out, and a frown that is not anger, are as familiar as if we had known him in our childhood. It is, indeed, very much as though we were allowed to hold him by the hand and go with him everywhere. The place is found; the hut is built, and a woman called Inger comes from over the hills and lives with him. Gradually, but deeply and largely, their life grows and expands. We are taken into it and nothing is allowed to escape us, and just as we accepted Isak so everything seems to fall into place without question. 'Growth of the Soil' is one of those few novels in which we seem to escape from ourselves and to take an invisible part. We suddenly find to our joy that we are walking into the book as Alice walked into the looking-glass and the author's country is ours. It is wonderfully rich, satisfying country, and of all those who dwell in it, gathered round the figures of Isak and Inger, there is not one who does not live. At the end Isak is an old man and his life is ebbing, but the glow, the warmth of the book seems to linger. We feel, as we feel with all great novels, that nothing is over.

(*June 11, 1920.*)

THE BOOKS OF THE SMALL SOULS

The Later Life — The Twilight of the Souls — Doctor Adriaan. By Louis Couperus. Translated by Alexander Teixeira de Mattos

Those of us who are seriously interested in contemporary fiction cannot afford to disregard these admirably translated novels by the famous Dutch author. It is stated in an explanatory note

that they can be read independently and separately, but that is, we think, to miss the peculiar interest of Mr. Couperus' achievement. True, the first book, which was published some years ago and which bears the covering title of the series 'Small Souls,' may be considered as complete in itself, but it is also the key to these three that follow after; and although apart from them, it may and it does strike us as very brilliant, very sensitive and amazingly vivid and fresh, it is only when we look back upon it and see it in its rightful place in relation to the others that we recognize the full significance of the qualities we admire.

We do not know anything in English literature with which to compare this delicate and profound study of a passionately united and yet almost equally passionately divided family. Little by little, by delicate stages, yet without any preliminary explanations or reserves, we are taken into the very heart of the matter. The troubling question which would seem to lie so heavy upon the pen of many a modern writer: 'How much can I afford to take for granted? How much dare I trust to the imagination of the reader?' is answered here. We are too often inclined to think it may be solved by technical accomplishment, but that is not enough; the reason why Mr. Couperus can afford to dismiss the question, to wave it aside and to take everything for granted, is because of the strength of his imaginative vision. By that we mean it is impossible in considering these books not to be conscious of the deep breath the author has taken; he has had, as it were, a vision of the Van Lowe family, and he has seen them as souls — small souls — at the mercy of circumstance, life, fate. He has realized that that which keeps them together, the deep impulse which unites them through everything, is apprehension. The real head of the family, the grim, ghostly shadow whose authority they never question, is Fear. So, as we speak of the idea underlying a poem, we may say that fear is the idea underlying these novels. If we listen deeply enough we can hear this unquiet

heart of the Van Lowe family throbbing quickly, and it is because it is never for a moment still that the author succeeds in keeping our interest passionately engaged. We are constantly aware of the vision, the idea; it is the secret that he permits us to share with him, and in the end it seems to give way to a deeper secret still.

In the first of these four great glimpses of the Van Lowe family the home is already empty. Some of the children are married with families of their own, and all are scattered, but the mother still has the power of calling them all under her wing every Sunday evening; and here it is that we meet them all quickened, all stirring because Mamma has asked them to take back Constance, a sister who disgraced them and who has just come back from abroad because her homesickness was worse than she could bear. She has come back because she cannot exist without family life, that precious exchange of tenderness and sympathy, intimacy and ease. Her sin was that years ago, in Rome, she betrayed her elderly husband with a young Dutch nobleman, and there was a divorce. But he has been her husband for years and their son is now a big boy: Constance imagines that all is long since forgotten and forgiven. Her own family, her own sisters and brothers, could not nourish a grudge against her. In their reaction to her presence among them we have the measure of the Van Lowe family, and we learn too that her real reason for returning was not her love of them all, but that she had failed to find happiness in her second marriage and was not strong enough to face unhappiness alone.

It is astonishing with what power and certainty the author gives us, in this book, the whole complicated Van Lowe family, how he suggests their weakness under their apparent strength, their wastefulness under their apparent reserve. Paul, the exquisite, with his mania for order, and his sense of the exquisite wasted upon ties and the arrangement of his wash-hand stand;

Ernst, who lavishes his pity and sensitiveness upon ancient pots and books; Dorine, whom nobody wants, spending herself upon things that do not matter, and Constance, with her longing to be loved thwarted by her jealousy and pettiness. Apart from them all there is Addie, Constance's little son, who looks at all that is happening with his grave, childish eyes and sees them as they are. This little boy, who is ten years old in the first book and is the Doctor Adriaan of the last of the series, is the hero, if hero he can be called. It is through him that Constance is received back into her family, and it is he who prevents his mother and father from making a tragedy of their lives. Until the last book he seems to be quite untouched by the terror of life and the weakness of the others. But in 'Doctor Adriaan,' just when we imagine that if the burden is to be lifted it will be lifted by Addie, the famous young doctor, the healer, it is quite wonderfully suggested that he too has not escaped. He feels at times a sense of dreadful insufficiency. He does not feel strong enough to stand alone, and turns to his foolish, charming father for support.

'The Later Life' is concerned almost entirely with the blossoming of a late love between Constance and a man as old as she, side by side with the very first early love of one of her nieces, Marienne. Under the spell of her feelings Constance becomes young again, but she does not become a girl again. Marienne, with her recklessness and her small laugh like a shake of silver bells, is cruel and violent. She must be happy; she will be happy. But Constance enters into a silent kingdom where everything is illusion and the air breathes peace. But the end, again, is like a question; it is a chord struck softly which does not close the phrase, but leaves us wondering.

In 'The Twilight of the Soul' the chief figure is of one of the brothers, Gerrit, a great bluff, burly, healthy brute of a fellow who is haunted by the feeling that there is a worm with legs

eating up his marrow. He has a charming little wife, nine little children, and everyone knows him and loves and laughs at him, and there is that worm — confound it — burrowing away with its legs and licking up his marrow. This is an amazing, masterly study in pity and terror. It is the flaming intolerable core of the book, and round it, retreating into the same shadow as he, we have Ernst and Henri and old Mrs. Van Lowe. It is as though the menace that has threatened the family so long, the immense lukewarm family, is realized at last and the Lord spews them out of his mouth. Yet how lingeringly, with what an art are they spewed! It remains in 'Doctor Adriaan' to gather up all that are left and to put them in Constance's care. But with them is Addie's wife, a great insensitive young woman who has no patience with their tragedies and thinks them all half mad. . . . The Van Lowe family has fallen; Mathilda treads it under her heavy foot and it does not stir. Even Addie thinks it is time.

But space does not permit us to deal with these books at length. There is an angle from which we seem to see them as the strangest landscapes, small, low-lying country swept continually by immense storms of wind and rain, with dark menacing clouds for ever pulling over and casting a weighty shadow that lifts and drifts away only to fall again.

(*June 18, 1920.*)

A PRIZE NOVEL

Open the Door . . . . . By Catherine Carswell

Out of the hundred manuscripts submitted to the publishers in their recent competition 'Open the Door' was chosen to receive the prize of two hundred and fifty pounds. The adjudicators are to be congratulated on their decision, for, while this novel is striking and unusual, it is eminently a serious piece of work and does not contain, in our opinion, those qualities which

are necessary to a popular success. That is to say, it is head and shoulders above the class of books which are commonly called 'best-sellers,' it makes a genuine appeal to the intelligence as well as the emotions, and we do not doubt for an instant that it was inspired by the author's love of writing for writing's sake.

But when Mrs. Carswell's novel has been taken down from its small particular eminence and examined apart we must write more warily. 'Open the Door,' which is an extremely long novel — it has four hundred pages, that is, about one hundred and eighty thousand words — is an account of the coming of age of a young Scottish girl. By coming of age we mean, in this case, the moment when Life ceases to be master, but, recognizing that the pupil has learned all that is needful, gives her her freedom, that she may, in turn, give it to the man who holds her happiness in his keeping. So, from the age of thirteen to the age of thirty, we find ourselves — how is it best expressed? — in the company of Joanna Bannerman, her family, her friends and her lovers. We are told of the influences that hold back or help to unfold the woman in her; her thoughts, feelings and emotions are described with untiring sympathy and skill; but how much, when all is said and done, do we really know of her? How clearly is she a living creature to our imagination? She is receptive, easily led, fond of the country, especially fond of birds, pools, heather, the seasons and their change, and, since she is almost constantly aware of her physical being, her sexual desires are strong.

> At eighteen, a little weary of fruitless emotion, a little dream-sick, the conviction had begun to force itself on Joanna that she was without attraction. For the past ten years she had lavished unreciprocated passion on individuals of both sexes. . . .

This persistent and deliberate search is perhaps peculiar to a certain character; but for the rest might not Joanna be anybody?

We look in vain for the key to her — for that precious insight which sets her apart from the other characters and justifies their unimportance. The family group, for instance, is solidly stated, yet it is conveyed to us that of them all Joanna was the only one that really mattered, because she was the one that broke away. But we never felt her truly bound. And then the men — are they not the shadows of shadows? There is young Bob, who cries when he ought to have kissed her; her sensational Italian husband breathing fire, Pender, the man of the world, and in the background Lawrence, who without her 'conceived of his life as a seed foiled of its consummation.' They are men only in so far as they are male to Joanna female.

All would be well, in fact, if the author did not see her heroine plus, and we did not see her minus. We cannot help imagining how interesting this book might have been if, instead of glorifying Joanna, there had been suggested the strange emptiness, the shallowness under so great an appearance of depth, her lack of resisting power which masquerades as her love of adventure, her power of being at home anywhere because she was at home nowhere. Mrs. Carswell has great gifts, but except in her portrait of Joanna's fanatical mother, she does not try them. They carry her away.

(*June 25, 1920.*)

WANTED, A NEW WORLD

The Mills of the Gods . . . By Elizabeth Robins
My Profitable Friends . . . By Arnold Palmer
The Golden Bird . . . . . By Dorothy Easton

Suppose we put it in the form of a riddle: 'I am neither a short story, nor a sketch, nor an impression, nor a tale. I am written in prose. I am a great deal shorter than a novel; I may

be only one page long, but, on the other hand, there is no reason why I should not be thirty. I have a special quality — a something, a something which is immediately, perfectly recognizable. It belongs to me; it is of my essence. In fact I am often given away in the first sentence. I seem almost to stand or fall by it. It is to me what the first phrase of the song is to the singer. Those who know me feel: "Yes, that is it." And they are from that moment prepared for what is to follow. Here are, for instance, some examples of me: "A Trifle from Life," "About Love," "The Lady with the Dog." What am I?

It does not appear from 'The Mills of the Gods,' however, that the question has ever troubled Miss Elizabeth Robins. The seven tales in this new volume are of a kind that might have appeared in any successful high-class magazine. They are wholesome, sentimental, and not so inconveniently thrilling that the train carries you past your station. Experience, confidence, and a workmanlike style — the author has all three, and they go far to disguise the hollowness beneath the surface, but the hollowness is there. There is not one of the seven which will stand examination. How is it that the author can bear to waste her time over these false situations which are not even novel? How can she bear to put her pen to describing the great-hearted, fearless, rude, swearing, murdering toughs who frequent the Golden Sand Gambling Hell at Nome? those types whom we know as if they had been our brothers, whose hats are off at the word 'Mother,' and who shoot the cook who denies them a can of peaches. And then to add to them a little golden-haired innocent child whose father dies, and whom they adopt and send to Europe to finish her studies, and write to in their huge childish fists, telling her she is never to go out without her chaperone and they all send their love! Oh, Miss Robins! We are very, very weary of this kind of tale, and if we cannot refrain from smiling at the love story of the passionate Italian whom 'his intimates in

Italy and elsewhere' called Satanucchio, it is not because we are amused.

'My Profitable Friends' contains a number of very clever sketches which ought to be more successful than they are. There is over them a strange breath of self-consciousness which blurs the effect of their sensitiveness and interrupts our attention, so that we have the uncomfortable and very cooling sensation that the author may at any moment be at hand to point out the subtleties. The book is not large, but it contains seventeen examples of his work; some of them are very slight, almost negligible, and perhaps it would have been better to cut down their number by half. On the other hand, it is interesting, when an author can write as well as Mr. Palmer at his best, to attempt to discover from the evidence what is his aim. We feel he has not yet made up his mind. In each story he makes it up again. His cleverness is indisputable; but when that matters to him a great deal less he will write a great deal better. At present he leans upon it — as in 'Eve Follyhampton' — and it carries him to just before the end; but then, when he has to throw it away and jump, it is kinder not to look.

It is Miss Dorothy Easton's happy fortune to be introduced to the public by Mr. Galsworthy in the kindest possible little speech. He describes the sketches in 'The Golden Bird' as 'little pictures, extraordinarily sensitive and faithful, and never dull.' That is very just criticism, but it does not prepare the reader for the quality of the 'little pictures.' The writer gives us the impression of being extremely young — not in the sense of a child taking notes, but in the sense that she seems to be seeing, smelling, drinking, picking hops and blackberries for the first time. She has a passion — there is no other word for it — for the English countryside. The people she meets she, in the frankest possible way, devours. There are still times when she mistakes sentimentality for feeling, and the little paragraphs at the end

under the title 'Moments' are rather a painful instance of this. But at her best her feeling for nature is exquisite. And for such sketches as 'An Old Indian' and 'From an Old Malt-House' we have nothing but praise. But while we welcome her warmly, we would beg her, in these uncritical days, to treat herself with the utmost severity.

(*June 25, 1920.*)

MR. CONRAD'S NEW NOVEL

The Rescue . . . . . By Joseph Conrad

The writer who has achieved more than a common popularity, who has been recognized as one of the very few whose place is not in the crowded and jostled front rank but a delightful airy perch among the mountains, is to be envied — and not to be envied. The distinguished position has its special drawbacks. Whether it is the effect upon him of the rarefied air, or of the dignified solitude, or of the cloud interposing and obscuring the smaller eminences, the valleys and the plains from his, at one time, eager gaze, we do not know, but the books which come down to us from the mountains are no longer the books they were. They are variations upon the theme that made him famous; they are 'safe' books, guaranteed to leave unchallenged the masterpiece that put him there. Who would tempt Providence twice? And so from timidity or pride, from poverty of imagination, or a high sense of his 'unique' duty, he continues to repeat himself, and it is only his memory which is in our flowing cups richly remembered.

Mr. Joseph Conrad is a remarkable exception to this lamentable case. Although he has long been recognized as one of our first writers to-day, he has never yet succeeded in satisfying our curiosity. We are always waiting for the next book, always

imagining that in the new book he will reveal himself fully; there will come floating in, on a full tide, his passion for the sea, his sense of style, his spectacular view of the universe, his romantic vision of the hearts of men, and we shall have the whole of Conrad — his measure — the bounds of his experience. These are large demands, but we do not think there is any doubt that they are more than satisfied by the appearance of 'The Rescue.' This fascinating book revives in us the youthful feeling that we are not so much reading a story of adventure as living in and through it, absorbing it, making it our own. This feeling is not wholly the result of the method, the style which the author has chosen; it arises more truly from the quality of the emotion in which the book is steeped. What that emotion is it were hard to define; it is, perhaps, a peculiar responsive sensitiveness to the significance of everything, down to the slightest detail that has a place in his vision. Even in the sober low-toned beginning the author succeeds in conveying a warning as of an approaching storm; it is as though the silence was made to bear a mysterious implication. And in this heightened, quickened state of awareness we are made conscious of his passionate insistence upon the importance of extracting from the moment every drop of life that it contains, wherewith to nourish his adventure.

For 'The Rescue' is supremely a novel of adventure in which Mr. Conrad has succeeded in blending the thrilling narrative of why Captain Tom Lingard of the brig 'Lightning' fails to keep his promise to recapture for the young Rajah Hassim and his sister Immada their stolen kingdom, and the equally thrilling narrative of the capture of Tom Lingard's soul by a white woman. The scene is 'the shallow sea that foams and murmurs on the shores of the thousand islands, big and little, which make up the Malay Archipelago,' and the strip of coast-line where the rival chiefs, Belareb and Tengga, have their settlements. We

cannot but remark how shadowy the land appears throughout this book; it is as though the water were the natural element of man. We see the line of the coast like a dark wing; it is land 'seen faintly under the grey sky, black and with a blurred outline like the straight edge of a dissolving shore'; or it is the dazzling vision of the settlements seen from the lagoon by Edith Travers. . . . 'the flutter of the streamers above the brown roofs . . . the stir of palm groves, the black shadows inland and the dazzling white beach of coral strand all ablaze in its formidable mystery.' Only on one occasion when Jaffir, the servant of princes, the messenger of great men, is described gliding and dodging through the jungle, 'between the trees, through the undergrowth, his brown body glistening with sweat, his firm limbs gleaming like limbs of imperishable bronze through the mass of green leaves,' do we lose the sensation that all is seen from the deck of the brig 'Lightning,' or of the old derelict vessel, the 'Emma.' As the sea appears to the landsman menacing and threatening, so does the land appear to Lingard. His strength depends upon his perfect knowledge of his little brig and upon a way of life which is, as it were, ruled by the tides.

The friendship that existed between Lingard and the Rajah Hassim was the result of a fight ashore when the young chief came to the rescue just in time to save disaster. Both these noble natures recognized the bond that must exist for ever after between them. For their characters, and that of the Lady Immada, sister to Hassim, are such as to give to their adventure a richness and splendour far beyond success or failure. It is right that they should have become united, that the chivalry in Lingard should have responded to the shadowy call of high romance, for King Tom or Rajah Tulla, as he is known to Belareb and his followers, could not have remained a trader. He is the embodiment of that virtue which — we are tempted to believe — Mr. Conrad ranks

highest, Fidelity, and the world, even the world of sixty years ago, has no use for such a man.

The drama, the conflict begins when an English yacht runs ashore upon some outlying shoals off the coast of Borneo and appeals to Lingard for help. It is, at this moment, most important as to his enterprise that nothing shall interfere with his rendezvous with the chief Belareb, who has promised his aid in return for arms and ammunition. Moreover, he realizes that a yacht stranded on a mud-bank is in great danger from the natives. And so he sails to their rescue and offers to take the owner, Mr. Travers, his wife and solitary passenger on board until the danger is past. But Mr. Travers treats him as an impertinent adventurer and orders him off. That same night the two gentlemen, while taking a constitutional on a sandbank, are captured, and there is nothing for Edith Travers to do but to place herself in the hands of Lingard. These three English people are 'the sort of people that pass without leaving footprints'; they are of the world, wordly. Travers himself is almost the Englishman of caricature, the bald-headed, red-faced, blustering, snobbish fool who imagines he can carry his castle on his back; D'Alcacer is a diplomatist, refined and dispassionate with an emptiness, a reserve that hides nothing at his heart. Each of them is in his way a falsity, an appearance, not a man, and when they are captured, in the magnificently decorative scenes where Lingard parleys with the Malays, the barbarians, in their mingled state and squalor and savagery, seem to blot them out of existence. But the woman, who is more false than either of them and emptier, is powerful. She is exceedingly beautiful. Tall, slender, all white and gold, with her strange air of aloofness and strength, with her strange silences, her gift for conveying with a glance an understanding and a sympathy which is almost god-like, she might herself represent Romance, but Romance in her world and not in Lingard's. She is the flower of corruption, the poisonous vine

that can only feed upon the life of another. And Lingard is her perfect, willing prey. The only one who recognizes her for what she is, is the Lady Immada, but it is, from the very first glance that Lingard gives her, too late. Life, Fate chose that she should come sailing out of the blue, that she should wreck his desires and his ambitions and sail away again, leaving no trace upon the sky and sea.

Why should this disaster have happened? It is to put the seal of greatness on ' The Rescue ' that the author gives us no answer.

(*July 2, 1920.*)

FIRST NOVELS

A Child of the Alps . . . By Margaret Symonds
The Story of a New Zealand River . By Jane Mander

We question whether anyone who has not himself written the eighty thousand-odd words realizes to the full the grim importance of the fact that a novel is not written in a day. In the case of the short story it is possible to give orders that, unless the house is on fire — and even then, not until the front staircase is well alight — one must not be disturbed; but a novel is an affair of weeks, of months; time after time the author is forced to leave what he has written to-day exposed to what may happen before to-morrow. How can one measure the influence of the interruptions and distractions that come between? How can one be certain of the length of time that one's precious idea will wait for one? And then, suppose the emotional atmosphere is recaptured and the new link forged, there is always the chance that memory may play one false as to what is already written. The painter places his canvas on the easel; he steps away, he takes a long absorbed look, and it is all there before him from the first stroke to the last. But the author cannot go back to

Chapter I. and read again; he has no means of constantly renewing his knowledge of what he has actually written as opposed to what he has come to take for granted is there. And who shall say it is easy, in the final moment of relief and triumph, when the labourer's task is o'er and he knows all, to begin to be critical on such a point?

'A Child of the Alps' and 'The Story of a New Zealand River' are two first novels which convey the impression that their authors were by no means sensible to the idea that there might be danger in the leisurely style. Miss Margaret Symonds, in particular, writes with a strange confidence; she has the reader's attention caught and thrilled by her artless tale of the 'strange child' Linda. All flows along so gently, all happens so easily, that we almost feel that we are children lying in our little beds and submitting to the story that the kind grown-up is recounting. It is the story of a girl whose mother was English and whose father was Swiss, and of how her true self, which was Switzerland, fought with her false self, which was England, and of how her true self nearly succumbed, but was in the end the conqueror. Linda, the child of the Alps, is a real heroine; she is exceedingly beautiful, with black hair reaching to her knees, great sombre eyes and tiny hands, but in spite of all that Miss Symonds tells us of her external appearance and of the infinite number of her sense impressions she will not materialize. We admit her youthfulness; we realize it was her time of life to flit from flower to flower, from mood to mood, from sensation to sensation, but she is a shadow without a girl. How beautiful is Switzerland in the winter, in the spring! How divinely lovely is Italy! Sweet sights and pleasant smells, charming pictures of peasant life abound, until we find ourselves in the strange position of skipping the story for the sake of the scenery. England, according to Miss Symonds, is life in the dining-room window of a suburban villa with the coal-cart passing outside, and Italy

and Switzerland are two heavens. But this excessive simplification does not make a novel, nor should the fact that the novel is not written in a day make the author less conscious of the deserts of vast eternity that lie before us. It is, we repeat, as though we listened to this gentle, well-bred book, rather than read it, and we close it with the feeling that the unknown plants and flowers are far more real to us than the unknown people.

The case of Miss Jane Mander is very different. Her 'Story of a New Zealand River,' which takes four hundred and thirty-two pages of small type to tell, has none of Miss Symonds' sophistication, or European atmosphere. The scene is laid in the back blocks of New Zealand, and, as is almost invariably the case with novels that have a colonial setting, in spite of the fact that there is frequent allusion to the magnificent scenery, it profiteth us nothing. 'Stiff laurel-like puriris stood beside the drooping lace fringe of the lacy rimu; hard blackish kahikateas brooded over the oak-like ti-toki with its lovely scarlet berry. What picture can that possibly convey to an English reader? What emotion can it produce? But that brings us to the fact that Miss Jane Mander is immensely hampered in her writing by her adherence to the old unnecessary technical devices — they are no more — with which she imagines it necessary to support her story. If one has the patience to persevere with her novel, there is, under all the false wrappings, the root of something very fresh and sturdy. She lacks confidence and the courage of her opinions; like the wavering, fearful heroine, she leans too hard on England. There are moments when we catch a bewilderingly vivid glimpse of what she really felt and knew about the small settlement of people in the lumber-camp, but we suspect that these are moments when she is off her guard. Then her real talent flashes out; her characters move quickly, almost violently; we are suddenly conscious what an agony, what an anguish it was to Bruce when he felt one of his drunken

fits coming on; or The Boss reveals his extraordinary simplicity when he tells his wife he thought she'd been unfaithful to him for years.

But these serve nothing but to increase our impatience with Miss Mander. Why is her book not half as long, twice as honest? What right has she to bore her readers if she is capable of interesting them? It would be easy to toss 'The Story of a New Zealand River' aside and to treat it as another unsuccessful novel, but we have been seeking for pearls in such a prodigious number of new books that we are forced to the conclusion that it is useless to dismiss any that contain something that might one day turn into a pearl. What is extremely impressive to the novel reviewer is the modesty of the writers — their diffidence in declaring themselves what they are — their almost painful belief that they must model themselves on somebody. We turn over page after page wondering numbly why this unknown he or she should go through the labour of writing all this down. They cannot all of them imagine that this book is going to bring them fame and fortune. And then — no, not always, but a great deal more often than the cultivated public would believe — there is a sentence, there is a paragraph, a whole page or two, which starts in the mind of the reviewer the thrilling thought that this book was written because the author wanted to write. How is this timidity to be explained, then? One would imagine that round the corner there was a little band of jeering, sneering, superior persons ready to leap up and laugh if the cut of the new-comer's jacket is not of the strangeness they consider admissible. In the name of the new novel, the new sketch, the new story, if they are really there, let us defy them.

(*July 9, 1920.*)

THE OLD AND THE NEW HAND

The Foolish Lovers . . . . By St. John Ervine
The Great Leviathan . . . . By D. A. Barker

'You can't expect a man to produce a masterpiece every time. He may not think much of this new book, himself. It's possible that he was bound to turn one out this season. . . .' But this gentle rain from Heaven upon our indignation in no wise cools it. We do expect each novel that a man writes to be better than the last, to be in fact that novel that we had imagined from the promise of his first books he was capable of writing. A 'masterpiece' is, of course, exaggeration. It has come to mean (see any young author's press notices) a novel which is not as other novels are. But, failing a sign, failing a few explanatory words, or a reproduction of the agreement, say, between publisher and author, which demonstrates how, willy-nilly, the thing had to be finished at a certain date, we shall go on treating each new book as the one that the author considers — or how could he honestly publish it? — an advance upon his last. That being so, the question arises how on earth Mr. St. John Ervine could have imagined 'The Foolish Lovers' to be a patch upon 'Mrs. Martin's Man.' Not that the latter was a great book, but it had qualities which made it possible for one to understand the admiration it aroused. It had vitality, a spareness, a sharpness of outline, and, more important than any of these, the emotional atmosphere was sustained from cover to cover. But 'The Foolish Lovers' has nothing to commend it but a good beginning.

While John Macdermott is a boy, living in the shop at Ballyards (which everybody knows is a town in Ulster) with his uncle William, a quiet, understanding man, a lovable ancient whose life is book-reading, and his passionate, hot-headed 'Ma' — while he and they talk in the queer, nice, Irish way, and there

is a smell of wet earth and of turf fires and the cold smell of brackish water — we are not without hope. But John grows up and goes to London and becomes not a writer, not a young man, but a creature of pen and paper. Enter lodgings at Brixton, the cockney maid, the usual theatricals on the ground floor, the melancholy landlady and the old, old London herring across the trail for comic relief. Enter also, for love interest, a pair of blue eyes. Well, there is this to be said. The author appears to be as bored by this hired furniture as we are, and when at the end John and Blue Eyes are led by baby fingers back to the old home in Ireland he does not scruple to use all the old tags that go to make short work of a story. But why did he write it? Or rather, why did he give up writing it? Perhaps he would reply that what is not worth doing is not worth doing well. It is a possible explanation.

We have no other novel of Mr. Barker's to measure 'The Great Leviathan' by. For a first attempt it is a commendable piece of work, but it does not — if one may be permitted the expression — cut any ice. It is pleasantly written, and there are many happy touches, but we are never certain as to what it is that the author is after. If he was after nothing, but merely engaged in showing us these various sketches of Tom, we should understand him better. But there is the title, and scattered here and there are vague intimations that his chief concern is to show us how Tom escaped, or was injured by the monster, Society. We are led to suppose that the early knowledge gained of his mother's unhappy marriage haunted him through his boyhood, and when he came to fall in love it was because of that he refrained from making Mary his wife. But it is very unconvincing. Neither does the case of Mary, who was brave enough to live with him 'in sin' as she presumably considered it, ring true. The Mary he describes would not have cared a button for the opinions of the cabbies on the rank at the end of their road. And why in

Heaven's name, Mr. Barker, should those cabbies have known? Shall we be detestable enough to say to the new author: 'And now, having got so far, why not try your hand at something a great deal better?'

(*July 16, 1920.*)

A HYMN TO YOUTH

The Happy Foreigner . . . . By Enid Bagnold

If Miss Bagnold had chosen that her heroine should lead the most sheltered and protected life that is left for a young woman to endure, we are confident that there would have blossomed within its narrow boundaries flowers as rich and as delicate as those which Fanny gathered on the strange roads of France. For she understands how it is vain to seek adventure unless there is the capacity for adventure within us—and if that is there, may it not be satisfied within four walls or the circle of lamplight? This generation assures us it may. Beauty looks in at the window. Experience knocks at the door. Why should one wander? Nevertheless, though the spirit of adventure may sing, may lament, exult, within our bosom's cage, there are moments when the old longing comes over us to fare forth, to put ourselves to the test, to lose ourselves in other countries, other lives, to give what we have in exchange for what we want, and thus to acquire strange unfamiliar treasure. But these moments pass very quickly. Few are brave enough to recognize them. They pass, and the wonderful light quivers on the walls, is like a pool of silver in the lampshine, and Beauty mounts guard at the window and Experience stands with a drawn sword at the door. But this sad ending cannot happen to Miss Bagnold, for 'The Happy Foreigner' exists for a proof of how she ventured, and to tell how great was her reward. Here is the plot.

Fanny, an English girl, goes to France at the end of the war and drives a car for the French Army. She falls in love, but it comes to nothing, and the end might be the beginning. That is all. Who Fanny is, what her life has been up till the moment she is discovered for us 'stretched upon the table of the Y.W.C.A.' in Paris, on her way to Bar-le-Duc, we are not told. She remains from first to last an unknown young woman, secret, folded within herself, a 'happy foreigner.' She is almost without fear; nothing can overwhelm her or cast her down, because it is her nature, and unchangeable, to find in all things a grain of living beauty. We have the feeling that she is, above all, unbroken. Driving in the rain, in the darkness, in the snow, living in a paper cubicle, with the bright eyes of a rat peering at her, enduring cold and vile food, being covered in mud from head to foot —these things happen to her, but she passes them by. They do not matter. They are incidents on the journey, but they are not more. Praise be to Miss Bagnold for giving us a new heroine, a pioneer, who sees, feels, thinks, hears, and yet is herself full of the sap of life. 'The Happy Foreigner' ends upon a note of happiness:

> To-morrow I shall be gone. The apple blossom is spread to large wax flowers, and the flowers will fall and never breed apples. They will sweep this room, and Philippe's mother will come and sit in it and make it sad. So many things will happen in the evening. So many unripe thoughts ripen before the fire. Turk, Bulgar, German,—Me. Never to return. When she comes into the room the apple-flowers will stare at her across the desert of *my* absence, and wonder who *she* is! I wonder if I can teach her anything? Will she keep the grill on the wood fire? And the blue birds flying on the bed? It is like going out of life—tenderly leaving one's little arrangements to the next comer. . . .

And drawing her chair up to the table, she lit the lamp and sat down to write her letter.

(*July 16, 1920.*)

RATHER A GIVE-AWAY

Daisy Ashford: Her Book. By the Author of 'The Young Visiters'

While realizing how difficult it must have been to resist — especially as the cupboard was not bare — we think that the author of 'The Young Visiters' has been unwise to respond to the greedy public's desire for more. Her new book was bound to invite comparison with the other; it is not a patch on it; and, more than that, does it not remove a little of the bloom from what was surely the chief charm of the adventures of Mr. Salteena and Ethel — we mean their uniqueness? 'The Young Visiters' was funny enough in all conscience, but the source of its funniness was that it was such a find. As we read, the picture was before us of the little girl making it up, saying the absurd things over to herself before she wrote them down with a very special kind of relish, and putting in the stops afterwards, especially the exclamation marks, with a heavy hand. But when Miss Ashford tells us in the preface to this new book that the first story was 'dictated to my father, who took it down faithfully word for word,' it is a very different affair. Likewise when she tells us that portions of her sister's story were dictated to her father and mother, 'and I think the nurse had a hand in it too.'

We do not doubt her sincerity for a moment, but was it possible for those grown-ups to refrain from getting all the fun they could from the amusing child; or could the child refrain, when she saw how they rolled their eyes, from playing down to them, from adding that couple of shrimps to the absurd enough afternoon tea? It is common and humiliating enough to see on the

face of a baby a shade of contempt at the things these monsters titter and giggle over. 'If you will think it is so very funny that I don't happen to know how babies come,' we can almost imagine Angela Ashford saying, 'I'll write you a whole story about it,' and she proceeds to compose, 'The Jellus Governess.' If we had not been told that nurse, especially nurse, helped with the writing out, we should have been more merry.

Perhaps the most amusing passage in this new book occurs in the first story, 'Love and Marriage.' A young gentleman is on his way to see his beloved.

> Just as he was thinking of going up to her house he saw Norah Mackie and Evelyn Slattery coming along together.
>
> 'Your friend,' they said chaffingly, 'is picking some old geraniums in the front garden.'
>
> Burke stared at them straight, and, putting out his tongue once or twice, walked on to find his darling pet.

This, we feel, is a true contribution to the number of retorts one can make to a silly, and certainly intended to be rather insulting, remark of that kind.

The remaining stories were written between the ages of eleven and fourteen. They are, for the most part, very dull, and dreadfully like the vast number of novels written by ladies whose intellectual life seems to remain for ever in its early 'teens.' But psycho-analysts, please note — it is surely strange for a child between these ages to occupy herself so passionately with the subject of courtship and marriage. The heavy, detailed descriptions of young gentlemen and their true loves read as though they were culled from the covers of servants' novelettes — those shiny, coloured covers that appear to have a rich varnish on them. In our experience the female child between those ages would have held such horrors in high contempt.

(*July 23, 1920.*)

THE LUXURIOUS STYLE

Linda Condon . . . . By Joseph Hergesheimer

If a novel is to have a central idea we imagine that central idea is a lusty growing stem from which the branches spring clothed with leaves, and the buds become flowers and fruits. We imagine that the author chooses with infinite deliberation the very air in which that tree shall be nourished, and that he is profoundly aware that its coming to perfection depends upon the strength with which the central idea supports its beautiful accumulations.

But in the case of 'Linda Condon' we have the impression that the author has planted something that never has time to take root, for he cannot resist the temptation to deck it with immediate branches, to clothe it with a multiplicity of exotic splendours. These are all very well in the first part of the book to gaze upon, to smell, to compel our astonishment; but at the end, at the moment when the harvest is to be gathered — ah, then — at that final moment which should be all compact of richness, we are confronted with a little dried-up, withered skeleton. Linda Condon, a small, grave young person aged ten, with ink-black hair, blue velvety eyes, cheeks like magnolia petals and lips carnation-red, is the embodiment of Mr. Hergesheimer's conception. There is that in her circumstances and in her behaviour which puts us in mind very vividly of Mr. Henry James's little Maisie. Like her, for all her appearance of being adequate to the strange situation, Linda is innocent of all evil; with the same touching and confiding air of understanding everything, she accepts her surroundings. Life is a drifting from one odious *hôtel de luxe* to another, from one odious gentleman *de luxe,* who is mamma's friend of the moment, to another. For Linda's mother is a gay, golden-haired woman of pleasure, whose days are divided between the mirror, eating, and railing against men,

and whose nights are devoted to getting what she can from 'the beasts,' and keeping her spirits up with drink. She is a vivid representation of the warm-hearted, vulgar, over-blown animal with whom contemporary fiction has made us as familiar as we wish to be, and the touch or two of strangeness which is apparent is due to the author's precision of detail. Until the age of fourteen Linda is her blind, adoring handmaid, but then, on an afternoon when her mother speaks to her 'sensibly' on the subject of marriage, she has for the first time a vague intimation of feelings which she cannot account for or explain away. These feelings recur, and the author reveals what we have called his central idea at a studio orgie, where in the contemplation of a cast of the Winged Victory side by side with a leering Chinese God it is explained to her that the one stands for the world of spirit and the other for lust. This time Linda is troubled with a rushing of wings and a feeling as if she were up among the stars.

'I have left Lao-tze for Greece,' said the sculptor to whom she confessed her vision, and she is his inspiration forthwith. It is through him that Linda discovers that she is not a living woman; she cannot love. It is as though, while she walked in the midst of those dangers that thronged her childhood, an icy finger had touched her, chilled her, so that she would always in experience and feeling remain a child. 'This child I to myself shall take.' But the Spirit of Beauty, in claiming her, has taken its revenge on life as well. True, the child (and now we mean that mystical child whom life is for ever threatening) has been saved, but only at the cost of keeping her a child for ever. This takes one hundred and fifty pages to tell — half the book. The scene has been any sumptuous hotel, and after the marriage of Linda's mother, the house of a wealthy New York business man. There is no important difference between these settings. Either is equally rich in descriptive matter, and it is his passion for registering

every pink-silk box of black chocolates, every cocktail, bath extract, perfume, sugared fig, quilted bed cover, web of lingerie, that in our opinion at first obscures, and finally smothers, Mr. Hergesheimer's central idea. Great brilliant chunks of this repulsive world of the very rich are hurled at us until Linda is scarcely visible, is pale as a pocket-handkerchief. And then, with the second half of the book, which tells of Linda's marriage and later life, we have the uncomfortable sensation all this does not matter. It is not as though the author has anything more to tell us about Linda; he can only prove, with her marriage, her absence of feeling for her children, her lack of response to her husband, her vague repetition of the old dream of stirring wings, that thus it is and ever shall be. It is a great pity that Mr. Hergesheimer has not faced the difficulties of a more reluctant and a more precious harvest.

(*July 23, 1920.*)

HYPERTROPHY

Development . . . . . By W. Bryher

This book is described as a novel; we should prefer to call it a warning. It is a solemn account of the dreadful fate that befell a young person for whom, at the age of four, 'the morning was wistful with the half-expressed desire: "If only I could have lived in an age when something happened."' For this egg, imp, sprite, darling of a pigmy size, there are no such things as newborn blisses; her days passed, we are told, unpleasantly free from danger, and 'she could never remember a time when she had not wanted to go to sea.' Not in a sieve, with her feet on a piece of pink blotting-paper, nor on a door-mat with a white cotton umbrella for a sail, but in a fishing ship that moved 'bird-like,' dear reader, among 'waves, dented blue or curved racing green.'

Well, well, it is sad to consider what sentimental old creatures we must appear to the infants of to-day, timidly asking them if they believe in children, much as thirty years ago they used to ask us if we believed in fairies. Children, indeed! Except for, between the age of five and seven, an unfortunate little affair over the ownership of a tricycle, a misunderstanding which might have culminated in disaster had not the Olympians intervened, there is no visible evidence that the heroine of 'Development' did not bid farewell to the childish state with her first bottle.

'Actual existence,' says the author, 'is too complicated to do more than puzzle a child of eight. Nancy, in fact, was not aware that it existed.' She found the 'Iliad' a great deal more to her taste, and such was her knowledge of life in Troy that 'she could see it, feel it, till her days passed in a crashing of bronze, a clatter of sandals, till to have seen the sun-browned body of a warrior catch the light at the corner beneath the heavy perfection of his harness . . .' would have surprised her a great deal less than the common things of day. Moments that she could spare from her books she passed in one or another museum in Florence and elsewhere, and we catch a wistful glimpse of her drawing aside the veil of years from the whole of antiquity, and cruelly, ruthlessly, throwing over charming Achilles for the fresher fascinations of modern-hearted Hannibal.

'The train reeking of Europe rattled on.' Our heroine at ten is on her way to Egypt. 'Italy was wonderful, but Naples was still Europe, and Egypt meant Africa.' What more is there to be said? Let these words suffice: 'Of all Egyptian history nothing had impressed her sailor mind so much as the expedition to Punt, and was not the tomb of Hatasu herself on the other side of the river? Then there was Rameses, the epic of Pentaur, on the great Karnak wall.' And so it goes on and on—this absurd auto-biography of a poor little stuffed owl, with its beak or its nose in the air. It is all very well for W. Bryher to say that 'her

impressions poured into the white and rounded vase' of her Nancy's imagination, 'hot and clamorous with sweetness.' Even if we knew what such a statement meant we should refuse to believe a word of it. It is not meet for little children to dig their sand-pies among the tombs, and Nancy at fourteen is an awful example of what such indulgence may end in. 'From the delicate bloom of peach the spirit of childhood flushed to the tenderness of a wild rose, it was ready to be one with dream.'

And then her shadowy parents emerged and thrust her into prison for three years where the girls wore white blouses, and were taught drill and nothing by elderly idiots who would not even understand her desire 'to keep her art free from any taint of school.' Follows another and a longer voyage to the beloved South of her childhood, and antiquity is recovered before the frescoes of the bull-ring and the cup-bearer. With the poetry of Verhaeren and Mallarmé and a touch or two of de Régnier, her mental bewilderment, to call it by no harsher name, is complete. Nancy recognizes that she is a writer born.

But here we would notice a strange lament on the part of the heroine that she is not a boy. She deplores her long draggled skirt, the fact that, as a girl, she can only 'write books woven of pretty pictures seen from a narrow window'; that she is sheathed in convention. There is also a nonsensical account of a female tea-party. But there is no longer any need for girls to wear draggled skirts or to sit at narrow windows or to scream and twitter; they have been running away to sea for years—the excuse will not serve. And although we are told she possesses 'the intellect, the hopes, the ambitions of a man, unsoftened by any feminine attribute,' what could be more 'female' than her passion for rummaging in, tumbling over, eyeing this great basket of coloured words? That she can find no use for them; that, lovely as they are, she has nothing to pin them on to, nothing to deck out in them; that *la bonne Littérature,* in fine, has

not bid her bind her hair, is no great marvel. She has been to a feast of languages ever since she was old enough to beat a spoon on the table.

(*July 30, 1920.*)

A FOREIGN NOVEL

Jenny . . . . . By Sigrid Undset

Of course we know a great deal better, and laugh at our emotion and refer to it as a foolish weakness on the part of our poor dear heart — who is like the timid old-fashioned wife of that brilliant young surgeon, the mind — but for all that, there is something in the opera 'La Bohème' that sets us sighing. . . . Yes, yes, of course it was an impossible, unhealthy, draughty life, with all those stairs, and no electric light, and no bathroom, and no cooked vegetables! But the white walls, the bunch of violets in a glass, the long loaf and the bottle of wine in a cupboard, her hat and his coat hanging from two nails. . . . Sentimental nonsense — but there you are!

The author of 'Jenny' has managed to capture this pale lilac sunlight, this youthful atmosphere so successfully that the glaring faults of construction are toned down. Her small group of Scandinavian students living in Rome, care-free, spending whole nights talking and whole days taking their fill of the sun and painting and eating and falling in and out of love, is excellently described. She can bring them together round a café table and make us realize how they are related to one another, how they react and respond, the quality of their group emotion; and she can part them, separate them, follow them one by one to the lighted attic where, solitary, they reveal the self that does not change. We are made to feel how the two women, Jenny and Cesca, for all that they are more important, richer, more sensitive

than the men, are yet at the mercy of life, are in danger, just because they are women. And yet the book fails as a whole because Miss Undset has been content, as it were, to uncover rather than discover Jenny. We should have known at the end why it was that, in giving herself to the man who she felt would be for ever a stranger, Jenny sins against the deepest impulses of her being — why, from that moment, Life would have nothing more to do with her. But this question, problem, which should be the living support of the novel, the author forgets, or allows to be smothered.

(*July 30, 1920.*)

ESTHER WATERS REVISITED

Esther Waters . . . . . By George Moore

Although conversation of the kind is seldom very fruitful, while young writers gather together it would be hard to find a topic more suited to their enthusiasm than 'Who are, when all is said and done, our best writers to-day, and why do we think so?' Present-day literature consists almost entirely of poetry and the novel, and when it is the latter which has been under discussion; when there has been a furious rage of condemning, admiring, prophesying, upholding; when all is over and the participants have distributed to their satisfaction the laurel and the bay, it is not uncommon to hear, from a corner, an American or a French voice upraised: 'But what about Mr. George Moore?' Of course; how strange! How difficult it is to explain how so distinguished a figure in modern letters comes to be forgotten! And even when we recall him to memory do we not see him dim, pale, shadowy, vanishing round this corner, disappearing behind that door, almost in the rôle of expert private detective to his novels rather than author. . . . This, too,

in spite of his detachment and candour, taking into account the delighted retracing, retracking himself down, so to say, for which he is famous. We have no other writer who is so fond of talking of his art. So endless in his patience, so sustained his enthusiasm, we have the feeling that he cannot refrain from confiding in the stupid public, simply because he cannot keep silent. And yet — there is the strange fact. While we are engaged in reading Mr. George Moore's novels he is 'there,' but once they are put back on the shelves he has softly and silently vanished away until he is heard of again.

The publication of a new edition of 'Esther Waters' provides an opportunity for seeking to understand this curious small problem. It is generally agreed that this novel is the best he has written, and the author himself has expressed his delight in it — 'the book that among all other books I should have cared most to write, and to have written it so much better than I ever dreamed it could be written.' 'Esther Waters' is, on the face of it, a model novel. Having read it carefully and slowly — we defy anyone to race along or skip — from cover to cover, we are left feeling that there is not a page, paragraph, sentence, word, that is not right, the only possible page, paragraph, sentence, word. The more we look into it, the more minute our examination, the deeper grows our amazement at the amount of sheer labour that has gone to its execution. Nothing from: 'She stood on the platform watching the receding train,' until the last pale sentence, the last quiet closing chord is taken for granted. How is it possible for Mr. George Moore to have gained such precise knowledge of the servants' life in Esther's first place unless he disguised himself as a kitchen-maid and plunged his hands into the cauliflower water? There is not a detail of the kitchen and pantry life at Woodview that escapes his observation; the description of the bedroom shared by Esther and the housemaid Margaret is as complete as though the author were preparing us for

some sordid crime to be committed there. And this intensely scrupulous method, this dispassionate examination is continued without a break in the even flow of the narrative. Turn to the page of the heroine's seduction:

> The wheat stacks were thatching, and in the rickyard, in the carpenter's shop, and in the warm valleys, listening to the sheep-bells tinkling, they often lay together talking of love and marriage till one evening, putting his pipe aside, William threw his arm round her, whispering she was his wife.

'Putting his pipe aside!' Could anything express a nicer control, a cooler view of the emotional situation? It is only equalled by: 'Soon after thoughts betook themselves on their painful way, and the stars were shining when he followed her across the down, beseeching her to listen.' It comes to this. There is not, in retrospect, one single page which is not packed as tightly as it can hold with whatever can be recorded. When we follow Esther to London here is the crown of the book. It is the London of that particular time preserved whole, a true 'London of the water's edge'—a London of theatres, music-halls, wine-shops, public-houses. And it is the scene of the struggle of Esther Waters to be a good woman and to bring up her child against fearful odds. The life of a general servant—how sordid, how vulgar, how ignoble! What a trapesing up and down stairs and a turning-out of ugly rooms! Mr. Moore spares us none of it, and when her 'luck changes,' and, married to the man who seduced her, Esther has a home of her own, it is the centre of a low-class gambling lot. Could all this be more faithfully described than the author has described it? Could it possibly be more complete, more probable? The technique is so even, it is as though a violinist were to play the whole concerto in one stroke of the bow.

And yet we would say without hesitation that 'Esther Waters'

is not a great novel, and never could be a great novel, because it has not, from first to last, the faintest stirring of the breath of life. It is as dry as the remainder biscuit after a voyage. In a word it has no emotion. Here is a world of objects accurately recorded, here are states of mind set down, and here, above all, is that good Esther whose faith in her Lord is never shaken, whose love for her child is never over-powered — and who cares?

> In the last year Jackie had taken much and given nothing. But when she opened Mrs. Lewis's door he came running to her, calling her Mummie; and the immediate preference he showed for her, climbing on her knees instead of Mrs. Lewis's, was a fresh sowing of love in the mother's heart.

Do we not feel that to be the detective rather than the author writing? It is an arid, sterile statement. Or this:

> But when they came to the smooth wide . . . roads . . . she put him down, and he would run along ahead, crying, 'Tum for a walk, Mummie, tum along,' and his little feet went so quickly beneath his frock that it seemed as if he were on wheels. She followed, often forced to break into a run, tremulous lest he should fall. . . .

The image of the little feet on wheels is impossibly flat and cold, and 'tremulous' is never the word for Esther — 'trembling' or 'all of a tremble' — the other word reveals nothing. What it comes to is that we believe that emotion is essential to a work of art; it is that which makes a work of art a unity. Without emotion writing is dead; it becomes a record instead of a revelation, for the sense of revelation comes from that emotional reaction which the artist felt and was impelled to communicate. To contemplate the object, to let it make its own impression — which is Mr. Moore's way in 'Esther Waters' — is not enough.

There must be an initial emotion felt by the writer, and all that he sees is saturated in that emotional quality. It alone can give incidence and sequence, character and background, a close and intimate unity. Let the reader turn to the scene where Sarah gets drunk because her horse has lost. It is a fearful scene, and so closely described that we might be at her elbow. But now Sarah speaks, now Esther, now William, and all is as cold and toneless as if it were being read out of that detective's notebook again. It is supremely good evidence; nothing is added, nothing is taken away, but we forget it as soon as it is read for we have been given nothing to remember. Fact succeeds fact, and with the reflection that Esther and her husband 'fell asleep, happy in each other's love, seeming to find new bonds of union in pity for their friend's misfortune,' the scene closes. Is that all? No wonder we forget Mr. George Moore. To praise such work as highly as he does is to insult his readers' intelligence.

(*August 6, 1920.*)

THROW THEM OVERBOARD!

The Story of the Siren . . . . By E. M. Forster

The delightful event of a new story by Mr. E. M. Forster sets us wishing that it had not been so long to wait between his last novel and his new book. He is one of the very few younger English writers whose gifts are of a kind to compel our curiosity as well as our admiration. There is in all his novels a very delicate sense of the value of atmosphere, a fine precision of expression, and his appreciation of the uniqueness of the characters he portrays awakens in him a kind of special humour, half whimsical, half sympathetic. It is in his best-known novel, 'Howard's End,' that he is most successful in conveying to the reader the

effect of an assurance that he possesses a vision which reigns within; but in 'Howard's End,' though less than elsewhere, we are teased by the feeling, difficult to define, that he has by no means exerted the whole of his imaginative power to create that world for his readers. This, indeed, it is which engages our curiosity. How is it that the writer is content to do less than explore his own delectable country?

There is a certain leisureliness which is of the very essence of Mr. Forster's style — a constant and fastidious choosing of what the unity shall be composed — but while admitting the necessity for this and the charm of it, we cannot deny the danger to the writer of drifting, of finding himself beset with fascinating preoccupations which tempt him to put off or even to turn aside from the difficulties which are outside his easy reach. In the case of Mr. Forster the danger is peculiarly urgent because of his extreme reluctance to — shall we say? — commit himself wholly. By letting himself be borne along, by welcoming any number of diversions, he can still appear to be a stranger, a wanderer, within the boundaries of his own country, and so escape from any declaration of allegiance. To sum this up as a cynical attitude on the part of the author would be, we are convinced, to do him a profound wrong. Might it not be that his conscience is over-developed, that he is himself his severest critic, his own reader full of eyes? So aware is he of his sensitiveness, his sense of humour, that they are become two spectators who follow him wherever he goes, and are for ever on the look-out for a display of feeling. . . .

It was the presence of 'my aunt and the chaplain' on the first page of 'The Story of the Siren' which suggested the tentative explanation above. The teller of the story is in a boat outside a little grotto on a great sunlit rock in the Mediterranean. His notebook has dropped over the side.

'It is such a pity,' said my aunt, 'that you will not finish your work at the hotel. Then you would have been free to enjoy yourself and this would never have happened.'

'Nothing of it but will change into something rich and strange,' warbled the chaplain. . . .

It would be extremely unfair to suggest that Mr. Forster's novels are alive with aunts and black with chaplains, and yet those two figures are so extraordinarily familiar, that we caught ourselves unjustifiably wondering why there must always be, on every adventure, an aunt and a warbling chaplain. Why must they always be there in the boat, bright, merciless, clad from head to foot in the armour of efficiency?

It is true that in this particular story the hero escapes from them almost immediately. He and Giuseppe are left on a rock outside the cave, so that the boatman may dive and recover his notebook. But the mischief is done. All through the enchanting story told by Giuseppe after the book is rescued, we seem to hear a ghostly accompaniment. They 'had been left together in a magic world, apart from all the commonplaces that are called reality, a world of blue whose floor was the sea and whose walls and roof of rock trembled with the sea's reflections'; but something has happened there which should not have happened there — so that the radiance is faintly dimmed, and that beautiful trembling blue is somehow just blurred, and the voice of Giuseppe has an edge on it which makes it his voice for the foreigner: the aunt and the chaplain, in fine, are never to be wholly got rid of. By this we do not wish to suggest for one moment that the key of the story should be changed, should be pitched any lower. It is exquisitely right. But we do wish Mr. Forster would believe that his music is too good to need any bush.

(*August 8, 1920.*)

A HOLIDAY NOVEL

X X X . . . . . By X. X. X. (X. X., 7s. 6d. net)

Seated in one of those sealed, sumptuous interiors where the rich, unbridled furniture seems to have gone back to the jungle, and the illusion is heightened by the two immense ebony elephants in full trumpet on the giant sideboard, each bearing on his trunk — inexplicable anomaly — a minute white china vase containing a dead fern, the terrified eye fluttering over the deathly-white page of the illustrated something or other, the terrified ear on the *qui vive* for that discreet rustle which must be followed up the ominous stairs and into a chair which would seem to have been designed as a smoking-room armchair for a skeleton, the entrapped mind all the time busy composing that sentence which should convey in a breath that we had not time to-day, and, indeed, had not come to have anything done, but just to be looked at in case — our attention was arrested by a winning little paragraph of advice which was intended for those of 'our readers' who had thought at all seriously of taking away a book with them to read on their holiday. It was distinguished by a note of quiet confidence, infinitely reassuring to a timid unaccustomed reader, to the effect that, provided the holiday was long enough, the print large enough, and the margins sufficiently wide, there was no reason at all why the entire book should not be finished before the hunt for the return half of the ticket began. It was hinted at that the book should have a serviceable cover to protect it from the ravages of wind, wave and tide — that it should not be read while swimming except in the case of a novice, when, an exciting chapter being agreed upon, the teacher should hold the book out of the water on a level with the patient's eyes, and, walking slowly backward, draw him on, almost literally speaking. Should the

book suffer from unexpected immersion (the book indeed!), a brisk drying in the open air, or failing this, on the outside of the bedroom window-sill (should the landlady have no objection), would soon set all to rights again. But while on the subject of accidents it further suggested that if the book should be buried, there is no cause for alarm; a spade should be quietly borrowed, the exact spot ascertained as far as possible, the sand gently removed so as to avoid any bruising of the cover, and upon recovery: 'Hold the book by the two stiffened sides. Clap together. It is one of the famous charms of sand that it is so quickly and so cleanly capable of removal. . . .' In the case of a picnic, especially where portable liquids were carried, it was strongly advised to place the book, if the reader looked forward to a quiet half-hour with it under a tree while the little folks wandered, on the top of the picnic basket, and, to prevent any fading or curling of the leaves, to make all snug with an old copy of yesterday's newspaper.

We were surprised to read that there were occasions when the presence of a book on a holiday made for selfishness, or perhaps thoughtlessness, rather. The example of reading at meals was given. To read at meals meant that the book was bound to be propped against something, and that something was almost equally bound to be an article of common use such as the cruet, the milk-jug, or even, in very thoughtless cases, a pot of jam. How often the writer had seen a retiring or shy nature's enjoyment of the meal entirely spoilt by his choosing to go without rather than force himself to break the silence of the table, at the risk of a possible snub or glance of amusement as well. On the other hand, it is not wise to leave the book on the hall-stand or thrust into the stairs during dinner. A run up the stairs with it to one's own bedroom may save many a long hour's search for it, later, or even a more bitter disappointment still. Never read either directly before or after eating;

after all, we have come away to give our digestions a rest; and, it is unnecessary to say, never read in bed. One may as well stay at home as risk one's life with a strange lamp or candle. One word more. It is most unwise to take away an author who is not thoroughly well-known and liked. What could be more unpleasant than to find yourself on a rainy day, in seaside lodgings, with someone whom . . . what indeed?

(*August 13, 1920.*)

DEADER THAN THE DODO

Queen Lucia . . . . . By E. F. Benson

'Lucia, with her enthusiasms and absurdities, is a delightful creature, worthy to rank with the immortal Dodo.' These are the concluding words of that paragraph on the paper wrapper which is to tempt the reader to open or not to open Mr. Benson's new novel. It is a great many years since we read 'Dodo.' How immortal does it remain for us? Memory, with some reluctance and hesitation, dives and fetches up . . . a slim creature with a wasp waist preening herself before a mirror, Beethoven, a great, blond, Newfoundland dog of a man on watch beside a cradle, a hunting crop, and over all a high, rapid, ceaseless chatter which may or may not have sparkled then, but which the action of the years has dreadfully dulled. . . . But we did imagine that the 'whole point' of the novel, as they say, was the charm of Dodo. The author and the reader agreed — did they not? — that she was a delightful creature, with her enthusiasms and absurdities. Lucia, however, in spite of that paragraph, is an extremely unpleasant elderly cat, with eyes 'like round buttons covered in black leather,' and 'hard, neat undulations of black hair.' Let us take the reader into our confidence. We believe there has been some extraordinary confusion on the part of the

author and the publisher and the characters, with the result that the lady to whom the paragraph applies is not Lucia at all, but her rival in the case, the opera-singer, who whistles on her fingers, calls her men friends 'my dear,' and tells them not to blush when they mention the fact that babies are born. We are prepared to eat our pen that it is she who is Dodo revived, but how aggravating and tiresome it is that the question should be raised, for at each fresh appearance of Lucia we find ourselves looking for the likeness, and at each new vulgarity of the opera-singer's we find ourselves recalling the resemblance.

There is the fact, however, that the author's chief concern is with Queen Lucia and her little country town of a kingdom. The silly, vain creature living in her Elizabethan house, with her Shakespeare garden, her 'amusing' furniture and her tame cat of a husband who writes prose-poems, is described at immense length. Likewise her immense importance as a leader of culture, a propagator of new ideas, an authority upon Music and the Arts, is drummed into our heads. For from the very first it is clear that Mr. Benson has no opinion of our heads at all. He does not even dream that we shall succeed in seeing his joke at first, but, once he has made it, rushes to try-try-try again as a matter of course. And what jokes they are!

> Then she looked at my pearls and asked if they were genuine. So I looked at her teeth, and there was no need to ask about them.

Or:

> 'Oh! it's so diffy!' said Lucia, beginning again. 'Georgie, turn over!'
>
> Georgie turned over, and Lucia, counting audibly to herself, made an incomparable mess all over the piano.

These are small particular stars. But the truth is that the whole book is one over-arching joke. Having succeeded, to his satisfaction, in making clear to us just how great a pretentious fool Queen Lucia was, the author proceeds to entertain us with the spectacle of her pride having fall after fall. The method is to spy upon the lady, to peep through the blind, over the wall, to snigger, to cry, 'That served her right,' 'That was a nasty one for her,' and 'She won't show her face after that in a hurry.' Her subjects are the comic figures of every comic country town. There is the old lady with the ear-trumpet, the elderly Colonel who feels young, the elderly young ladies who are giddy and slap each other in their playful way. And if we add that they were — Queen and all — taken in by an Indian who pretended to be a great teacher, and was a brandy-drinking burglar in disguise, and afterwards by an elderly ruffian who pretended to be a Russian Princess and a Spiritualist — it will be plain to see what matter for mirth is here!

But the dismallest feature of all is that Mr. Benson's humour should have gone — not to the dogs, but to the cats.

(*August 20, 1920.*)

VICTORIAN ELEGANCE

A Fool in her Folly . . . . By Rhoda Broughton

In the sympathetic short preface which Mrs. Belloc Lowndes has written for this, Miss Broughton's last novel, she tells us that Miss Broughton was 'curiously humble about her books. It was almost as if she was content to regard her literary gift as a kind of elegant accomplishment. . . .' Why should this astonish Mrs. Belloc Lowndes? It is delightful to think that the author should have been so nice a judge of her talent, for that, after reading 'A Fool in her Folly,' is precisely what we feel

it to have been — 'a kind of elegant accomplishment.' It is far from our desire to be lacking in respect for Miss Broughton's memory; but why does Mrs. Lowndes trouble to quote the 'acute modern critic writing for Americans' when he declares that Miss Broughton 'seemed to him the nearest thing [*sic*] in spirit to Jane Austen that we have had in recent times'?

There can be no question of comparison between them. That Miss Broughton always put the best of herself into everything she did is undoubtedly true, but that she could have, even if she would have, put all of herself into anything that she did is quite a different matter. We do not think she had any such aim. There is, in this novel at least, a kind of deliberate sustained pose which is deeper than the manner of the tale-teller. Her delicate garrulity, the angle at which she gazes at the tiny storm there, where it tosses, at the bottom of one of Mamma's delicate teacups; the quaintly flippant gesture with which she dismisses the ultimate disaster — all seem to say: 'You see for yourself that I am not to be taken too seriously. It is only a story after all.'

If we were certain of living to be as old as Abraham there is no reason why time should not be found for 'A Fool in her Folly.' But whirling at the rate we go (and we seem to go faster and faster; we have had scarce time to greet the summer this year, and now the leaves are falling) it is difficult to recommend it to grown men and women. It is a girls' book. Girls of all ages, from thirteen to eighty-five, will revel in it. It will not bear looking into; it will not tolerate any questions or interruptions. It must be taken whole, just as it is or not at all.

Let us try to make our meaning clearer. 'A Fool in her Folly' is a story in the Victorian tradition, supposed to be related by an old lady of eighty. It tells how when she was a plump little partridge of twenty she ate of the forbidden fruits in her Papa's library, and falling into a fever, half indigestion, half curiosity, as a consequence, determined to write a novel her-

self. It was to be a burning and mighty story of passion, its title was to be 'Love.' What she wrote we are not told. The tepidity, almost bordering on idiocy, of her family circle, their politeness, forbearance, gentleness and modesty towards one another, are excellently described, as is the scene between her parents and herself when the fatal manuscript is discovered. For her crime, and to save her family from being corrupted by her very presence among them, she is sent away to a widowed Aunt, and there, meeting a real live man, who is as wicked as he is handsome, she learns to live her book over again. This time she is saved by a friend of the Aunt's and sent home — to spend the remainder of her life — *i.e.,* sixty years — repenting. But what had she written? Either it was pestiferous balderdash or it was all nonsense. Either her parents were idiots or she was a little horror. And what happened between her and the villain thus to destroy her whole life? And was her mind a perfect sink or was she merely the victim of growing curiosity? All these questions are left *dans le vague* — in that dreamy, faint, dazed world where girls of thirteen and girls of eighty-five laugh and cry over the same book.

(*August 20, 1920.*)

HEARTS ARE TRUMPS

Island Tales . . . . . By Jack London

On the back cover of 'Island Tales' there is a list of thirty-four of Jack London's books which are to be had in a cheap edition. To read the titles is to get a curiously vivid idea of their author, of not only the kind of thing he liked to write about, but even of the way in which he approached his subject. 'Children of the Frost,' 'When God Laughs,' 'The Cruise of the Dazzler,' 'The Little Lady of the Big House,' 'A Son of the Sun' — they

conjure up an impression of a simple-hearted teller of tales who has been up and down the world, who has a fondness for Nature in her extreme moods, and is by no means devoid of sentimentality. We feel as we glance down that long list that here was a genial, warm-blooded fellow, who liked a name to be a name, a snowstorm to be a snowstorm and a man to be a hero. He is one of those writers who win the affection of their readers — who are, in themselves the favourite book. But this very affection which he inspired is a something sentimental. That which prevented Jack London from ever being one of the real adventurers, the real explorers and rebels, was his heart; there was always the moment when his heart went to his head and he was carried away by passions which were immensely appropriate to the occasion, but which suffered from a histrionic tinge. Then his simplicity, smothered under a torrent of puffed-up words, obscured the firm outlines upon which his story relied, and we were left with the vaguely uncomfortable sensations of those to whom an ' appeal ' has been made.

Jack London at his best was the author of ' White Fang.' From the first chapter we step straight into the book. There is the immense snowy landscape, spread out unruffled, empty as far as they can see except for the sled, the straining dogs, the two tiny creatures who urge them on, and, as the quick dusk thickens, the moving shapes of shadow which howl after them. In describing at length the hateful fight that went on and on, in making us watch with the tiny creatures and fear for them, in keeping the issue so uncertain that we cannot afford to take our eyes off those starving beasts for a second, the author prepares us for his story. For the first chapter is only a prologue — a taste of what wolves are like, a ' now you know what wolves can be,' which precedes the life-story from the birth to the fulness of years of that most beguiling animal, White Fang. White Fang, fat little cub, tumbling through the fourth wall of his mother's

cave and rolling in the sun, is hard to resist. The strange, especial tenderness that men and women feel for small animals is called forth by every fresh activity of this infant wolf, and it is astonishing to what extent he becomes for us an individual creature, a wolf that we could pick out from among other wolves. Only when the love-master (unfortunate, characteristic appellation) comes along and has succeeded in making a kind of *Oberhund* of him does the image begin to blur. There are no human beings in 'White Fang,' except those as seen through a wolf-dog's eyes — simplifications of human beings, and that is why it is so successful.

When we turn to 'Island Tales' we cannot help regretting that the gleaners have been so busy in the field where such a teeming crop has been reaped. For there is not a single story in it which is better than the average magazine supplies. True, his admirers would recognize them as having come from the Jack London shop; but they are machine-made, ready-to-read tales which depend for their novelty upon the originality of the Hawaiian ornament. It is a little sad to notice the effect of this ambrosial climate upon his style of writing. Words became hyphenated, bedecked, sentences were spun out until the whole reminded one of the wreaths — the 'Leis' or love-tokens — that the gentle savages love to hang about their necks. And then the Hawaiian greeting, 'Arms around,' as he describes it so often and with such delight, was no antidote to his sentimentality. It would not, however, be fair to judge him by this book. But it does confirm us in the opinion that his salvation lay in wolves, snow, hardship and toil.

(*August 27, 1920.*)

A WITTY SENTIMENTALIST

In the Mountains . . . . . Anon. (Macmillan)

It is not difficult to decide who is the author of 'In the Mountains,'[1] and the absence of difficulty is part of the proof that it is a good book. Individuality is hard to come by nowadays, and it covers a multitude of sins, as Uncle Rudolph found when he proposed (on about the last page) to Dolly. The sins to be covered by this author's individuality are none of them very big ones — the worst being a trick of invoking the amorphous God of modern optimism to give an air of seriousness and weight to things that do not really need it. 'Nothing in winter,' she writes, describing her mountains, 'but the ineffable cold smell of what, again for want of a better word, I can only describe as God.' The God who comes in to help one out of a literary emergency is a fairly familiar figure nowadays; but we don't like him any the better for that. And we like him the less when he interferes, as he occasionally does in this book, with the expression of an individuality we do like.

And how delightful the author of 'In the Mountains' can be! To her wit and whimsy is added an irrepressible, palpable delight, which one can feel and share, in the airs and graces of writing. She has a delicate pen that lovingly shapes her phrase, and an instinct that keeps it true to experience, 'as though one were writing a letter to somebody who loves one, and who will want to know, with the sweet eagerness and solicitude of love, what one does and what the place one is in looks like.' That is not the whole of her, by any means; there is a detachment and a touch of worldly wisdom added to a *fond* of femininity that make of her quite definitely an artist.

Perhaps the most interesting thing about her equipment, her composition, her make-up, is the slight instability in the mixture

[1] The author of 'Elizabeth and her German Garden.'

of her elements. She is profoundly a sentimentalist, and her sentimentality keeps jumping out in spite of all the ironical detachment she can muster against it. She cannot really control it —'God' is merely one of its temporary disguises—and one cannot help speculating whether she would be a better writer if she could. It is the malign fate of writers with the gift of wit that we should always be asking them to be witty, that they should tighten the firmness of their exquisite control most sedulously there where they want to be free of it for a moment. In the sentimental vein the touch of the author of 'In the Mountains' seems a little less than secure.

But amusing and entertaining books are so rare that we cannot leave this one with a grumble. The whole story of Miss Barnes and Dolly 'Jewks' and Uncle Rudolph (the Dean) is splendidly told, and there is a page at the beginning of that long episode, on the feminine theme that 'what one has on underneath does somehow ooze through into one's behaviour,' which is inimitable. In the same genre, peculiarly this author's own, is a little anecdote of her being discovered by her Swiss handyman, in the fancy dress of a devil, in the act of going into her bedroom to look for her tail. It is perfect.

(*August 27, 1920.*)

SUSSEX, ALL TOO SUSSEX

Green Apple Harvest . . . By Sheila Kaye-Smith

'Green Apple Harvest' is another of those Sussex-grown novels for which Miss Kaye-Smith has gained a reputation. Its headquarters are a Sussex farmhouse; it wanders through Sussex lanes, fields, meadows, fairs; plays in and out of a Sussex public-house with Sussex farmers as broad as they are long for company; and notes the fact how in Sussex Summer

follows Spring, Autumn comes after Summer, and lean old Winter with his beard of ice brings up the rear. As for the manner of speech in Sussex, it is here so faithfully recorded that words with double dots, double vowels, buzzing, humming words, words with their tails cut off, lean words grown fat and stodgy words swelled into dumplings lie so thick upon the page that the reader needs a stout pair of eyes to carry him through.

The name of the farmhouse is Bodingmares. It is the home of the Fuller family — Faather and his second wife Elizabeth; Mary and Jim, two children of the first marriage, and Robert and Clem, two half-grown sons of the second. Mus' Fuller is a grim ancient with 'a mouth stretched into a line which might have been a smile if it had not been so thin and tragic.' He worships at the Methodist Chapel.

> 'Then you mean to tell me as you're praaperly saved?'
>
> Bob wriggled in his chair.
>
> 'I dunno.'
>
> 'Wot d'you mean — You dunno as you're saved? I tell you as there aun't never no mistake about that. As the lightning shineth from one part of heaven to another. . . . Wot did you stand up for if you didn't know as you were saved?'
>
> Robert filled his mouth quite full of pudding, and was silent.

But Death and Miss Kaye-Smith remove him at a rattling pace on page 37. Thus his epitaph:

> The years of his health had been spent in brooding on heavenly things, but from the moment his last illness began his mind seemed to concentrate on the small things of the sick-bed. His fight for life was entirely a matter of dose and diet, and his final surrender was not to the Everlasting Arms, but to his own fatigue.

Now for Elizabeth. She is something weak, soft, a creature of physical charms. . . . It was (most surprisingly) 'her hair flying dustily golden like pollened anthers' that had snared old Mus' Fuller. Within six months of his death she is married to Wheelgate, the postman, who takes her to Eastbourne for their honeymoon, thereby proving himself a man of more substance than Jim had supposed him to be, and afterwards to a home of their own, where she has bright chintzes and brasses, and spends the rest of her life cutting out youthful blouses. And exit Elizabeth.

Mary and Jim may be dismissed, one as a spiteful voice, the other as a drawl. There remain Robert and Clem. Clem, the meek plodder, has black hair and yellow eyes. Otherwise his face is 'just the face of a common Sussex lad, with wide mouth and short nose, and a skin of Saxon fairness under the summer tan.' But Robert. It is he who gives the book its name.

> 'Sims to me as Bob's life lik a green apple tree—he's picked his fruit lik other men, but it's bin hard and sour instead of sweet. Love and religion—they're both sweet things, folks say, but with Bob they've bin as the hard green apples.'

So at long last we come to the hero. Rise up, rise up, young man! It is for you that Bodingmares, that shadowy farmhouse, and the shadowy family have been called into existence. Stand forth, your feet rooted in the dark soil of Sussex, your arms green branches, heavy honey-sweet blossom pushing through your breast. If this is the story of your lusty youth, your broken prime, your bitter harvest, let us, in Heaven's name, have the truth. . . . But the florid young man in check breeches and gaiters escapes Miss Kaye-Smith's pen more effectually than all the rest. Violence does not make a man, yet it is the only attribute that the author grants him freely. We are told how at chapel a voice cried to him to stand up and testify, and because that voice made him feel a fool he determines to do all those things

'as He doan't hold with' to serve God out. So he goes after the gypsy girl Hannah — the old, old gypsy girl with her shawl and her feathery hat and her wild ways — and drinks and bets. But it is all in vain. God will not let him go and at the end Bob dies for His sake. . . . 'I've got a feeling that if I go to the Lord God I'll only be going into the middle of all that's alive. If I'm wud him I can't never lose the month of May.'

'Green Apple Harvest' is an example of what a country novel should not be. It is a novel divided against itself, written with two hands — one is the country hand, scoring the dialect, and the other is the town hand, hovering over the wild flowers and pointing out the moon like the 'blown petal' of a cherry tree. If the novel were ever alive it would be pulled to death between them.

(*September 3, 1920.*)

SAVOIR-FAIRE

Lady Trent's Daughter . . . . By Isabel Clarke

Chapter One. 'Miss Arden had just laid aside her knitting because it was getting too dark to see comfortably. . . . The evening had followed upon a perfectly lovely day in early June. The morning had begun with a thick white mist. . . . And afterwards, when the sun had finally triumphed, there had supervened a golden day with just a hint of crispness in the air at first, but with sunshine that blazed prodigally for nearly a dozen hours. . . . And now the day was done.'

These observations, which occur on page 1, set us dreaming. Just supposing that between two and three the sky had become overcast, and it had looked very much like a shower, or, before luncheon, a nasty little wind had sprung up. How would the sympathetic reader have received such intelligence? Would his

jaw have dropped? Would he have shaded his eyes with his hand a moment, murmuring, 'This climate—this climate!' Is this first page, in fact, a perfectly devilish piece of insight on the part of Miss Isabel Clarke, or, as this is her thirteenth novel, the result of long practice upon the human heart? Here we are, you see, introduced to Miss Arden before we know it—the wretched business of presentation got over in the dusk, with her laying aside her knitting at the end of a perfect day. A perfect day—how softly it launches us, how easily we glide away on it! There had been that tiny moment of doubt, when the mist was so thick, just to urge our curiosity, but the instant dispelling of it captured our confidence. And pray do not overlook the delightfully—one might almost say cosy relationship that is established between us by 'the evening had followed upon a *perfectly* lovely day . . . there had been just a *hint* of crispness.' And underlying all this there is the dark, wicked certainty, the pungent relish to the mild dish, that this sort of thing is a great deal too good to last, and would not be mentioned, indeed, if the worst were not going to happen. . . .

What does happen is that Miss Arden's niece, who is fatherless, and whom she has brought up from babyhood, falls in love with a young man who is already engaged to her absentee mother. This, when the mother arrives on the scene, is, needless to say, very awkward, and might well have ended in catastrophe had not the happy ending intervened to unclasp the wrong hands and join for happy ever the right ones.

(*September 3, 1920.*)

LETTERS

Verena in the Midst . . . . . By E. V. Lucas

It is a fearful thing to have to lie in bed. To be sent to bed, to be commanded to stay there—to gaze from a little valley of

humiliation, up, up to that ineffable brow that, wreathed with the mists of discretion and vacancy, bends over one. . . . To pipe: 'When shall I be allowed to get up again?' and to be answered by: 'We had rather postpone our answer for the present.' These are moments which set the soul yearning to be taken suddenly, snatched out of the very heart of some fearful joy, and set before its Maker, hatless, dishevelled and gay, with its spirit unbroken. For it is impossible to go condemned to bed in our grown-uppishness without recalling how favourite a remedy it was with our parents and nurses for a spirit that wanted breaking. There, naked between the sheets, prone when all the rest of the world is walking or leaping, conscious, to a hopeless degree, that it certainly isn't for you that the clocks chime, the cups rattle, the lamps are lighted and the door-bell rings, one wages many a fierce battle. But the infants who emerge triumphant are, depend upon it, bound to be attacked by larger nurses and more unyielding parents later on, who will send them back to bed for another tussle, as though it were never too late to break. . . .

The case of Aunt Verena, the heroine of 'Verena in the Midst,' is, however, not all tragic. True, the ingredients are there. She has had a fall upon the ice which has injured her spine, and she must lie still for an indefinite period. And we are told, on page 3, that she lives normally 'a hundred minutes to the hour.' Nevertheless, and in spite of two occasions when we are given to understand that her courage failed her completely, her condition is not all tragic, because her spirit is not entirely unbroken. It is, in the most accommodating fashion for her family and friends, charmingly bent. Riches, leisure, freedom from all responsibilities have not smothered her, and, on the other hand, an affair of the heart with an artist has prevented her from losing touch with the young and foolish. She is, therefore, sustained and fortified by friends and relations from the very moment her head touches the pillow. In giving us the pick of her postbag Mr. Lucas has chosen

those letters which, read together, fit into one another and form a brightly patterned little story. We are reminded of a pleasant chintz — not too modern, and yet gay — the groundwork, a soft mignonette green, being Aunt Verena, the largest flower (which might be anything) being Mr. Richard Haven, a special splash of attractive colour for the ardent young nephew Roy, and a delicate little border for the nicely behaved amusing children. There are certain characters who are negligible or blurred; there is not one who changes when his part in the design recurs. With one letter from each of them you have the whole of them, and Aunt Verena remains, from first to last, tender and pale.

'Verena in the Midst' is not to be taken seriously. With the exception of the nephew Roy, who is quite amazingly made known to us, there has been, on the part of the author, no serious attempt at revelation. We never know the authentic thrill of reading a letter which is meant for the inward ear; we doubt very much if Aunt Verena had one. Mr. Richard Haven's daily sentimental humours, each carrying a poem like a cut flower — poor flower — between its pages, bore us very heartily, and there is, over all, a kind of tameness, not to say a smugness, which lies heavy. But who shall fathom, who shall explain, the fascination of reading other people's letters? Aunt Verena, well and hearty, living her own life in precisely these same circumstances, would not have a leg to stand on. But when she is in bed, at the mercy of her postbag, we can sit beside her and await with a great deal more than resignation the glimpse of another letter from poor, dear Louisa.

(*September 10, 1920.*)

AN IMAGINED JUDAS

The Autobiography of Judas Iscariot.

By Alfred Tresidder Sheppard

'The Autobiography of Judas Iscariot' is a strangely uneven, incalculable novel. The beginning, which tells of the childhood of Judas, is a series of violently seen, savagely felt incidents. There is his fight with the tiny boy who taunts him for being a bastard; then his capture by the robbers on the sea-coast, who try to drown him, his shivering childhood on the fringe of their camp, and his recapture by a rich Arab chieftain, travelling to Baghdad. Here, in the palace, he found favour in his lord's eyes and lived in the harem until he was sixteen, and then, in another fit of rage, he killed the old eunuch, Hormisdas, and fled to Joppa.

> I looked upwards; the sky was black and ominous, and in a few seconds rain fell in immense drops. People on the quay scattered; there were left but a few beggars, clamouring for alms. Some were blind, some eaten away by leprosy; all were filthy. A man had been charming snakes; as his audience dispersed, he put the snakes and his reed into a silk bag, and went away cursing.

From the chapter which begins with these words the narrative changes. It is more sustained, and the style settles into — if we may use the expression — a weary stride. It is a kind of half-swinging, half-loping gait, and it seems, somehow, to fit the restless, eager, doubting young Judas. The author makes us feel the tragedy of the man who is chosen for the crime, how he is, in spite of himself, for ever being prepared for his part, and half seeking to escape from it, and half lured on. What had his life been until he met Jesus but a schooling in how to destroy,

how to betray, how to sell himself? And those strange moments when he sees himself as a rival of Jesus — is not he too a wanderer, a sufferer infinitely weary, a man who would enter as a king into his own kingdom? — are very powerfully suggested. Judas is the dark mocking shadow of Jesus; the light maddens and exasperates him, and yet he cannot tear himself from it. The strongest bond of all, that of the saviour and the betrayer, binds them together.

The mistake Mr. Sheppard has made is in allowing our view of this tortured creature to be interrupted so often by giving us his account of the events in the life of Jesus. Here, again, we encounter the strange, flat dullness which seems to brood over these stories when they are retold, and, although the author's reason for introducing them is to show how Judas never could wholly accept their miraculous explanation, he buries his hero beneath them.

(*September 10, 1920.*)

A DULL MONSTER

Caliban . . . . . By W. L. George

The first impression and the impression that abides after reading Mr. W. L. George's latest novel is that it is so very late indeed. Six years ago, no eight years ago — no, ten — this kind of novel was the height of fashion. The model was new; it suited the young writers of those ebullient days. They could not resist making a copy for themselves, and looking back across the immense interval we picture them tricked out in it, we see them banded together as a kind of Fire Brigade, dashing off at an immense pace and clatter to put out, to destroy, to turn the hose upon, any solid sedate residence which was not and never could be on fire. It was still most amusing and almost novel

in those days to laugh at Victorian furniture, to discuss endlessly the fashions of that period and to recall the comic ballads or the tender strains of 'Come to me, Sweet Marie.' Leg of mutton sleeves, bustles, what-nots and the fact that you must never stand anything on top of the Bible provoked the merriest peals. There was a feeling in the air that life was such a game, such fun, such a lark, such a rag! And there was, above all, an idea, a kind of nebulous football of an idea which floated and bumped in everybody's direction and simply asked to be kicked high and sent flying, that the thing to do was to 'get down to it' and to be bold. 'Toujours de l'audace'—we actually said it then.

The model upon which all these copies were fashioned survives, but it has become something of a curiosity. We do not admire it less than we did then—but it is impossible for us to recapture the emotional state in which it was presented to us then. To say that the war has changed our attitude to life is not a very useful thing to say, neither is it wholly true. But what it has done is to fix for ever in our minds the distinction between what is a fashion and what is permanent. In spite of all the nonsense that is admired and the rubbish that is extolled we do perceive a striving after something nearer the truth, something more deeply true among a few writers to-day.

So it is with astonishment and not a little amusement that we observe appearing in the broadest daylight, complete to the confident eyebrows, the quaint figure of ten years ago—the rather smallish man, not handsome but immensely vital, the man who has thrust upwards, hitting, pushing, smashing the family solidities in Maida Vale, 'three years before the first Jubilee,' laying about him relentless and determined until he emerges finally into the blazing glare as the author of 'Zip.' Richard Bulmer (you mark the punch in the name) from his early youth discovers that what the world wants is Zip, and Zip is a patent food of his own invention which is to be eaten with every news-

paper and magazine that he can lay hands upon. His method is to buy the paper, mix so much Zip with it as it will hold and — feed the greedy millions. The greedy millions are fed. Bulmer, rising by swift degrees to Lord Bulmer of Bargo is Lord Northcliffe's rival. He buys papers as other men buy cigars. He buys men, women, houses, Power, but slim, cool Janet, with her graceful untidy hair and her look 'like warm snow' he cannot buy. Not even when the war broke out and he rushed into Janet's flat, and: 'His brain was fumous, his speech was a lyrical song of slaughter. In mangled sentences he expressed ideas newborn, aspiration to honour for his country that was actually an aspiration to deeds. He grew breathless; his mouth was dry. He was in the grasp of an epic poem. . . .' Not even when 'in silence, muscle against muscle, teeth clenched they fought each other, hard breathing, giving forth the muffled cries of effort,' and Janet 'clutched at her hair that was loosening, and pressed her other hand against his chin, bending him back as an arc.' These cinematographically contested episodes end in Janet's marrying another ('For a moment Atlas bent under the weight of earth') and a final scene when our hero creeps back to his humming lair in Fleet Street and hears the boys cry his papers, while he murmurs that tag that used to end them in those days: 'One doesn't hitch on to anybody. One just messes about a bit in the middle of life and life sails away.'

But why Caliban? What has this to do with Caliban? Shall Caliban come roaring out of his case with a gnawed copy of *The Times* at the wave of Mr. George's wand? Caliban is far too real a monster to dance to the tune of 'Hello Life.' But there again — we recognize the bygone fashion. Of course it would be Caliban!

(*September 17, 1920.*)

THE CASE OF MR. NEWTE

The Extra Lady . . . . By Horace W. C. Newte

The case of Mr. Horace W. C. Newte is a strange one. In spite of the fact that three million pairs of eyes devoured 'Sparrows,' 'The Extra Lady' is, we confess, the first of his novels that we have read. Brilliant paper covers on the bookstalls satisfied our curiosity by telling us (so we imagined) all there was to know in their would-be ensnaring sub-titles — 'The Story of an Unprotected Girl' or 'The Story of a Tense Human Passion.' These conjured up a vision of certain theatrical posters of provincial melodrama — girls in the act of being chloroformed and spirited away in malignant-looking cabs by auburn-haired villains in check riding breeches, or, in the case of that Tense Human Passion, two tailors' dummies — *en costume de bal* — embracing between a red lamp and a fan. But while we are aware that it is the fashion nowadays among our higher *intelligentsia* to find in these exhibitions something exquisitely amusing, we must confess, for our part, that to 'discover' them deliberately does seem to us to take the edge off their humour. And so we have passed Mr. Newte by.

To read 'The Extra Lady' is, however, to realize that its author cannot be dismissed as a maker of melodrama. For some not easily discoverable reason he has chosen to cloak, to partly disguise his remarkable talent in the 'regulation get-up'; he is the professional writer as one speaks of the professional actor — the real right-down 'pro' who knows the whole affair from A to Z and is never for a moment unconscious of his audience. And since what the great dependable public care about is 'a good plot,' a good sound plot they shall have with a happy ending at all costs — 'quite regardless,' in fact.

His performance is as good as his promise, but the affair,

as they say, does not end there. Mr. Newte's talents come issuing forth from that stage ink-pot, they seize on that flowing pen and impose their will upon it. There are chapters, scenes, episodes, in 'The Extra Lady' when a whole peculiar world — the world of Mr. Newte the artist — is shadowed forth, and we are made astonishingly aware of his possession and knowledge of it. His strange, fantastic figures whose lives are spent in the corridors of life, in the dressing-rooms, at the stage-door, whose sole ambition is a good part, and yet whose reply to Mary's question to poor Lehel: 'Are you on the stage?' would have to be his: '*In*frequently — *in*frequently' . . . refuse to be kept within bounds. They talk, they weep, they drink too much, they spend half their lives trying to find somebody who will listen to the secret (which eats them away and is yet their pride) of how they went on the stage and yet never need have gone. They are terrified of the future, but it is never out of their sight. Dark, lean, impoverished, it follows on their heels; it has a trick of leaping and suddenly rushing forward.

If we followed Mr. Newte's plan of pointing the moral, we should say that 'The Extra Lady' proved the danger of unselfishness when it is carried too far — it may be a form of weakness, an indulgence which will be the ruin of the lives it sets out to save.

But a fig for Mr. Newte's plan! Why can he not leave the moral alone? What he has very nearly succeeded in doing is giving us an imaginative study of a girl called Mary Bray, who is persuaded that she owes it to her family to go on the stage to 'keep the home together,' and who spends all the best years of her life gradually, terribly, giving way, learning the boundless extent of her folly and its everlasting consequences, and in the process becoming unfitted either to withstand those consequences or to accept them. If he had left her on the side of the road, crying bitterly, holding her shabby collapsible basket. . . .

How dare that motor-car come along with its eighty-thousand a year inside — how dare it! We should understand Mr. Newte if we knew.

(*September 24, 1920.*)

FISHING AS A FINE ART

The Tragic Bride . . . . . By F. Brett Young

After reading 'The Young Physician' in the winter of last year we were left with the feeling that the author's next novel would be very 'significant'; it would show, it could not help showing which way he was going to travel and the degree to which he cared whether it was a question of his readers showing him the direction they preferred him to take. Did he realize how well he had described the relations between the small boy and his mother? There was, under that apparent simplicity, what appeared to be a very honest sincere attempt to face the great difficulty which presents itself to the writers of to-day — which is to find their true expression and to make it adequate to the new fields of experience. That Mr. Young did not succeed in this attempt did not surprise us. But what he did put a keen edge on our anticipation of the next time.

Well, the next time has come and we are positively flung into the air along with the author, his line, bait, reel and all. What has happened? What waters are these to be fished? Let us, if we are after the tragic bride, be cast. But no! Our state is one of suspension from beginning to end. 'The Tragic Bride' is a fisherman's reverie; and, fascinating as that may be to the fisherman, rich enough, complete enough to need no excuse; though he may return from it with the memory of a day's exploration to satisfy him, we, who have been promised fish —

wonderful enchanted fishes — are brought to the point of exasperation.

If we had not been prepared so carefully for a prize most rare! But the opening pages are full of nothing but such a preparation. If we had been given a hint that after all the outing might have to be 'all,' even then we should not have felt cheated. But to follow and to follow and to follow — to listen, to attend, to be ever watchful, and then to have the chase complicated wilfully — so we feel by this time — is too much for the reader to bear. We remain Mr. Brett Young's disappointed and disheartened admirers.

(*September 24, 1920.*)

NEW SEASON'S NOVELS

A Tale that is Told . . . . By Frederick Niven
The Amorous Cheat . . . By Basil Creighton
The Granite Hills . . . . By C. E. Heanley

The new season has begun, and again we open our papers to read what the reviewers have to say about the new novels. In spite of all the novels and all the reviews we have read, we confess the moment still thrills us. There are, we believe, majestic beings who can pass the new novel by without so much as a swerve, who can ignore the little stir it causes, who dare swear it to be 'only another poor author having a fit' — and so to the Masterpieces. But who can be sure? Mightn't it be — mightn't it be — and the possibilities are so overwhelming — something brought from a far country, something never dreamed of, something new, marvellous, dazzling — changing the whole of life. . . . 'But really!' the poor author may cry, tossing a handful of cold water on our trembling, tiptoe flame. 'Now it is you who are going too far in the other direction. Attention, consideration,

an adequate appreciation of what I set out to do — well and good. But whoever said that I claimed my novel to be the startling, extravagant creature you would have it?'

'Didn't you?' we hear ourselves answering. And then there is a pause, and we hear ourselves whispering, 'No, I don't suppose you did.'

(And yet — when the idea was still an idea — before a word had been written — were there not mysterious moments when you felt that naught save a new world could contain your creations?)

A glance at such reviews as have appeared, a careful reading of the three novels before us and the author's protest is felt to be just. There is, at least in so far as these three novels are concerned, nothing new — or rather nothing that was not equally new last season and the season before that. They are new novels within the limits imposed by the old. There is the plain fact, to be wondered at or not, as the reader chooses. But before we examine their merits, might we inquire a little further into this feeling that, in spite of such substantial evidence to the contrary, the novel which is not an attempt at nothing short of Truth is doomed? We are leaving out of account for the moment the pastime novel, but how are we to be expected to take seriously — as seriously as we take 'War and Peace,' for example — any work which appears to have engaged less than the whole passionate attention of its author? To be fobbed off, at the last, with something which we feel to be less true than the author knew it to be, challenges the importance of the whole art of writing, and instead of enlarging the bounds of our experience, it leaves them where they are.

Now the prologue to Mr. Frederick Niven's 'A Tale that is Told' promises a great deal. In it the teller of the tale gives us his reasons for writing it. They are the best reasons in the world: 'Because I am interested.' He continues: 'I think the

result is going to be a blend of what that young novelist, Mr. Hugh Walpole, calls " a case," and at the same time partakes slightly of the qualities of the " slice of life " school. . . . What I am I shall not be able to hide even if I try. You will see me between the lines; you will discover me as I discover others to you. . . .' And his hero goes on to tell us how he has been haunted all his life by a feeling that it is only part of a greater life. The prologue ends thus: '. . . And I think the best beginning would be to tell how my father ate the sweetbreads shortly before we went for our holiday to Irvine.'

Why should our spirits have fallen so woefully at those last words? Why should we have felt that in their familiar tones we had the whole capacity of the book? Nay, we venture to assure Mr. Niven that, the opening chords given, there is scarce a reader of *The Athenæum* who could not pipe a very fair version of the occasion. It is, as he gives it to us, a charming interlude, full of delicate degrees of tone, the accents nicely stressed, the touch sustained. And in it his whole book is contained. The family rises from the table, it goes about its appointed ways. It scatters — the father dies. And all these things happen to the accompaniment of just that blend of sentiment and truth which accompanied the sweetbreads. But that hint of the greater life lies buried in the prologue. It is as though the author realized its importance, and yet could find no other place for it in his quiet book than in the churchyard.

' The Amorous Cheat ' is the second book of an author whose name is unfamiliar to us. It is accomplished skating over thin emotions; it is highly skilled revolving and turning in champagne air. The author is positively never at a loss for a fresh caper, and the train who follow in the wake of Edward and V. is made up of figures who are pleasantly unusual and lightly fantastic. But there is a dreadful feeling throughout that if the air were to become one whit less brightly cold, not only the ice

would melt. The tragedy does not happen; the ice holds; but in spite of our admiration at such a display of virtuosity we are more fatigued than is complimentary. If only Edward and V. would be still for a moment; but that is just what, for the purposes of 'The Amorous Cheat' they cannot be.

There remains a first novel—'The Granite Hills'—by a writer whose youth looks out of every chapter. The scene is Cornwall; the matter is high passion. Both are so like other examples of their kind that we might almost call them typical Cornish ware. The hills, the granite stones, Curnows and Trevales, splits, cream and boiled leg of pork—these are all in the setting. And then there is the gently bred girl who is poor and marries the young farmer for the sake of what he can buy her, and has scarce learned to repent before the handsome stranger of her own class comes along and woos her with talk of Iseult. There is the tragedy averted and the slow building of a real heroine at one with the aforetime hostile sea and moor and granite and splits and cream, and the last paragraph dissolves, bathed in sunset light. 'The Granite Hills' is naïve because it is a first novel, and it is neatly put together; the turnings are neat, the seams are fair. But we wish the author would cut out a whole new pattern for herself next time.

(*October 1, 1920.*)

ENTERTAINMENT — AND OTHERWISE

The House by the River . . By A. P. Herbert
Larry Munro . . . . . By G. B. Stern
The Fourth Dimension . . By Horace A. Vachell

Hundreds of years hence, we venture to prophesy, the curtains will divide and discover a young man in a check suit with a bow-tie much too big for him and a straw hat much too small,

standing with his back to a glade of yellowing beech trees and reddening bracken and saying: 'A friend of mine came home late one night — early one morning, I should say — and his wife's mother happened to be staying with them at the time. I ought to have mentioned that he hadn't been married longer than you might have expected. . . . What are you laughing at?' Yes, they will be laughing, and at the word 'twins' the laughter will swell into a roar. For — and the reasons are many and curious, and well worth inquiring into — it is the melancholy fact that precious little is needed to amuse and divert people. They are ready to accept almost anything, and really, there are times when it seems that the staler the entertainment the more successful it is likely to be. . . . Let the song be — not the same song we heard last time, but a 'new' one so like it that we know just when to laugh and beat. Let us be able to recognize the heroine the moment she tosses her bright head, and grant us the flattering sensation of never being taken in by the dark but too good-looking young man. The effect upon popular fiction of this easy acceptance is to fill the book-shelves ninety times nine with the old, old story. After all, if the public is content, why bother to give it the new, new story? And why, when success is so easy, not have it and hold it from this time forth for evermore? It is not as though the pastime novel were out to tell the truth and nothing but the truth.

At this dismal juncture we should like to introduce an exception; it is 'The House by the River' by Mr. Herbert. Here is a novel which does set out deliberately to be an amusement and a distraction, and, at the same time, its author has succeeded in giving a wonderfully vivid and convincing portrait of a certain 'type' of young man — one Stephen Byrne, a young man who has the great misfortune to murder the housemaid almost by accident when he is alone with her in the house one evening. We heartily commend this book to the readers of *The Athenæum;* it

is excellent entertainment, and it is, in a way not quite easy to define, 'something new.' How far does Mr. Herbert intend to deceive us with that high-spirited and rather ordinary beginning? And then, little by little, just when we imagine we begin to see what the picture is like, with a stroke here, a stroke there, a sharpening of this line, an accenting of that — all is changed. Stephen Byrne and his wife Margery emerge — real, brilliantly seen — in the case of Stephen indeed, diabolically real. You see Mr. Herbert's method is to change nothing, alter nothing, present Life in a cultured little back-water just as it is — rather delightful, rather vain — to keep the surface, in fact, untroubled and yet broken with charming little emotions. And then, just as we are caught in the glow from some old-world dining-room window, we are permitted to see what is inside that ideal house for a poet, and there is the poet strangling the housemaid. The affair was easy enough to explain. He had dined very well, he had come home in a glow himself, and, full of vague kindling feelings, he had watched the sun set over the river. Then, because he was not in the humour for writing and there was no one to share his emotion with him, he felt vaguely dissatisfied, and drank a glass of port just as Emily came downstairs, rosy and uncommonly pretty after her warm bath. He said fatuously, 'Had a nice bath, Emily?' and 'he put one arm round her as she passed, lightly, almost timidly.' Then he did a thing he had never done before — kissed the housemaid — and she screamed; and the scream startling him back to reality and a consciousness of the neighbours, . . . 'Playfully almost, he put his hands at Emily's throat.' But the idiotic girl would take it seriously, would make a noise, bit his hand, maddened him, so that when he let go she was dead.

What would you do if you, a successful young poet, with a delightful wife, charming home, delicious little-daughter-and-her-rabbits, and a golden future, found yourself in such an in-

credibly unexpected 'hole'? Couldn't you act well enough, lie convincingly enough to deceive the stupid world? And mightn't the fact that you were an imaginative writer be an immense help? It nearly saved Stephen Byrne, but then the temptation to see the thing from the writer's point of view, to 'use it' as copy (changed, of course, out of all knowledge, disguised as a romance of chivalry with Emily buried most beautifully, most movingly in a lonely lake instead of thrust into a sack and tipped into the Thames), was too strong for Stephen. He yielded and was undone. As to having murdered Emily, that in itself, Mr. Herbert's pen makes us feel, was the kind of thing that might happen to any man. It's the fuss afterwards that matters — the law — hanging — the last morning's breakfast — that can't be got over . . .

'Larry Munro' is for other readers. Is this Miss G. B. Stern the author of 'Children of No Man's Land'? In that novel she packed so many talents that it would not hold together; it flew apart and was all brilliant pieces, but in this! Larry Munro, we repeat, and once again Larry Munro. That is all there is to be said for it. Miss Stern herself strings a quantity of more or less bright little beads in between, but they are scarcely visible for the flashing, all-a-quivering Larry Munros of which her chain is composed. It is not stupid — it is silly; not clever — but bright; and it is so sentimental that it makes the reader hang his head.

'Within three days she was in the thick of it, slightly befogged but happy. She had told herself she was an outsider, beyond the pale that encompassed these smart London folks. It astonished her how easy it was to get on with them.' This is your country mouse arrived at the Castle to help the Duchess with her theatricals. 'Amongst the guests who were not concerned . . . might be found a Cabinet Minister, a famous doctor and a hanging Judge.' That hanging Judge, who appears from time to time

in novels without his black cap, strikes the key for us. Mr. Vachell plays the familiar tune. It is entirely without surprises.

(*October 8, 1920.*)

OBSERVATION ONLY

The Captives . . . . . By Hugh Walpole

If an infinite capacity for taking pains were what is needed to produce a great novel, we should have to hail Mr. Walpole's latest book as a masterpiece. But here it is — four parts, four hundred and seventy pages, packed as tight as they can hold with an assortment of strange creatures and furnishings; and we cannot, with the best will in the world, see in the result more than a task — faithfully and conscientiously performed to the best of the author's power — but a 'task accomplished,' and not even successfully at that. For we feel that it is determination rather than inspiration, strength of will rather than the artist's compulsion, which has produced 'The Captives.' Still, while we honour the author for these qualities, is it not a lamentable fact that they can render him so little assistance at the last — can give him no hand with this whole great group of horses captured at such a cost of time and labour, and brought down to the mysterious water only that they shall drink? But, alas! they will not drink for Mr. Walpole; he has not the magic word for them; he is not their master. In a word, for all his devotion to writing, we think the critic, after an examination of 'The Captives,' would find it hard to state with any conviction that Mr. Walpole is a creative artist. These are hard words; we shall endeavour to justify our use of them.

But first let us try to see what it is that Mr. Walpole has intended to 'express' in his novel — what is its central idea. 'If this life be not a real fight in which something is eternally gained

for the universe by success . . .' It is, we imagine, contained in these words of William James. A *real* fight — that is the heart of the matter — and waged in this life and for this life that something may be eternally gained. Maggie Cardinal, a simple, ardent creature with a passion to live, to be free, to be herself and of this world, is caught as she steps over the threshold of her Aunt Anne's house in a burning, fiery trap. Maggie is, we are told over and over, a child of nature, ignorant, simple, rough, but with a loving heart. She has a persistent feeling, however, that she is different from all the rest of the world, and that she will never belong to anyone. Her nineteen years of life have been spent in the wilds with a disreputable father. But at his death she is captured by her Aunt Anne and by the fanatic religious sect to which her Aunt belongs. The head of the Kingscote Brethren is Mr. Warlock, and Martin, his son, is the second captive. Maggie's father and Maggie's aunt are determined, with all the passion of their fanatic souls, to offer these two to God when he descends, as they believe he may do at any moment, in his chariot of fire. Hence their cry, torn from them, to be free — to be allowed to fight in this world; hence their struggle. But when, after endless complications and separations, they are released from their fiery bonds, what happens? What has been the significance of all this to them? We are led to believe that both of them are conscious, while they are fighting the world of Aunt Anne and Mr. Warlock, that, nevertheless, they do acknowledge the power of some mysterious force outside themselves — which may . . . some day . . . what? We are left absolutely in the air. Maggie and Martin, together at last — Martin, a broken man, and Maggie happy because somebody needs her — are not living beings at the end any more than they are at the beginning; they will not, when Mr. Walpole's pen is lifted, exist for a moment.

But apart from the author's failure to realize his idea, the working out of 'The Captives' is most curiously superficial. Mr. Walpole acts as our guide to these strange people, but what does he know of them? We cannot remember a novel where we were more conscious of the author's presence on every page; but he is there as a stranger, as an observer, as someone outside it all. How hard he tries — how painfully he fails! His method is simply to amass observations — to crowd and crowd his book with figures, scenes, bizarre and fantastic environments, queer people, oddities. But we feel that no one observation is nearer the truth than another. For example, take his description of Aunt Anne's house. The hall, we are told, smelt of 'damp and geraniums,' on another occasion of 'damp biscuits and wet umbrellas,' on another of 'cracknel biscuits and lamp oil.' What *did* it smell of? And how many times is hissing gas mentioned to make our blood creep? The disquiet pursues us even to the sordid lodgings in King's Cross, where the hall is lighted by a flickering candle, and yet Maggie, in the filthy little sitting-room, *presses the bell* for the servant-maid. But above all let us take Maggie. She has read practically nothing — 'that masterpiece, "Alice in Wonderland,"' and 'that masterpiece, "Robinson Crusoe,"' 'The Mysteries of Udolpho,' and certain other books. But 'the child (for she was nothing more),' as the author countless times assures us, was totally ignorant. Yet entering her aunt's drawing-room for the first time, and stumbling: 'They'll think me an idiot who can't enter a room properly,' she reflects. This is a highly sophisticated reflection, surely. And she takes a taxi, pays a call, knows just how to address the London maid at the door — behaves, in fact, like a perfect lady. Yet 'it is a sufficient witness to Maggie's youth and inexperience' that she is startled and amazed by a cuckoo clock. She did not know such things existed! Again, would that girl notice how much stronger and firmer her uncle's thighs looked when he came to

see her in London — would she notice too, at a moment of dreadful stress, the size and plumpness of her husband's thighs 'pressing out against the shiny black cloth of his trousers'? Are these *her* observations? No, they are the literary observations of the author. And above all, is it possible that the greenest of young persons would trust the gay, saucy Miss Caroline Smith? In describing Maggie's relation to Caroline, Mr. Walpole appears to have relied on Dickens for his female psychology and his manner; but Dickens is a false friend to his heroine. And who could have taught Aunt Anne's parrot 'Her golden hair was hanging down her back'? And why should Mr. Warlock, in the aunt's drawing-room, ask Maggie to 'forgive' his speaking to her — as though they had met at a pillar-box? And who can accept her marriage with the Reverend Paul, in the 'shadow of whose heart' — for all her physical horror of him — she 'fell into deep, dreamless slumber'?

Thus do we receive shock after minute shock, each one leaving us chillier. But in spite of it all, the feeling that remains is the liveliest possible regret that Mr. Walpole should have misjudged his powers — so bravely.

(*October 15, 1920.*)

'SOME NEW THING'

Three Lives . . . . . By Gertrude Stein

Miss Gertrude Stein has discovered a new way of writing stories. It is just to keep right on writing them. Don't mind how often you go back to the beginning, don't hesitate to say the same thing over and over again — people are always repeating themselves — don't be put off if the words sound funny at times: just keep right on, and by the time you've done writing you'll have produced your effect. Take, for instance, the first

story of the good Anna who managed the whole little house for Miss Matilda and the three dogs and the underservant as well. For five years Anna managed the little house for Miss Matilda. In those five years there were four underservants. 'The one that came first. . . .' She was succeeded by Molly; and when Molly left, old Katy came in every day to help Anna with her work. When Miss Matilda went away this summer 'old Katy was so sorry, and on the day that Miss Matilda went, old Katy cried hard for many hours. . . . When Miss Matilda early in the fall came to her house again old Katy was not there.' At last Anna heard of Sally.

If the reader has by this time settled himself, folded his hands, composed his countenance and decided to stay, we can assure him that Miss Gertrude Stein will not disappoint him. She will treat him to the whole of the good Anna's life from her arrival in America until her death, and to the whole of the gentle Lena's life from when her kind but managing aunt, Mrs. Haydon, brought her to Bridgepoint until her death also — and in between these patient, hard-working, simple German lives there is the life of the negress Melanctha. Now that simple German way of telling about those simple German women may be very soothing — very pleasant — but let the reader go warily, warily with Melanctha. We confess we read a good page or two before we realized what was happening. Then the dreadful fact dawned. We discovered ourselves reading *in syncopated time.* Gradually we heard in the distance, and then coming uncomfortably near, the sound of banjos, drums, bones, cymbals and voices. The page began to rock. To our horror we found ourselves silently singing:

> Was it true what Melanctha had said that night to him? Was it true he was the one who had made all this trouble for them? Was it true he was the only one who always had had

wrong ways in him? Waking or sleeping, Jeff now always had this torment. . . .

Those who have heard the Southern Orchestra sing 'It's me — it's me — it's me' or 'I got a robe' will understand what we mean. 'Melanctha' is negro music with all its maddening monotony done into prose; it is writing in real rag-time. Heaven forbid Miss Stein should become a fashion!

(*October 15, 1920.*)

ASK NO QUESTIONS

The Romantic	By May Sinclair
The Last Fortnight . . .	By Mary Agnes Hamilton
The Headland	By C. A. Dawson-Scott
The Passionate Spectator .	By Jane Burr

It is not possible to doubt the sincerity of Miss Sinclair's intentions. She is a devoted writer of established reputation. What we do deplore is that she has allowed her love of writing to suffer the eclipse of psycho-analysis. To try to explain — for the author to stand to one side and point out the real difficulties — is that what she sees as her task? But all these four novels might be called studies in explanation. We do not know if the reader will find them as profoundly disconcerting as we have done, but in any case we trust he will not take it amiss if we offer that 'little advice' which, as they say, hurts no one. To begin with — in order to read these novels at all it is absolutely essential that the reader should make his mind a perfect blank. If he starts remembering other books he has read, murmuring over great names, recalling scenes that were brighter, freer, words that were longer even — he may count his time lost. If he looks up to wonder whether people are like this, he may never look down

again. If the meaning of what he reads is as plain as the nose upon his face, that is not the moment to feel impatience; it is the moment to attend humbly and patiently to the psycho-analytical explanation of that meaning or that nose. But to our muttons.

'The Romantic' is a study of a coward. John Conway falls in love with Charlotte Redhead:

> 'Would you like to live with me, Charlotte. . . .'
> 'Yes.'
> 'I mean — live with me without *that*.'

He explains:

> 'Because — you don't understand, Charlotte — if I know a woman wants me, it makes me loathe her.'
> 'It wouldn't, if you wanted *her*.'
> 'That would be worse. I should hate her then if she made me go to her.'

Now Charlotte has already experienced physical love. She is just free of her 'immense unique passion' for Gibson Herbert.

> Even then there was always something beyond it, something you looked for and missed, something you thought would come that never came. There was something he did. She couldn't remember. . . . She saw his thick fingers at dessert, peeling the peaches.

This being so, she is content to share life with John 'without *that*.' But even before the war breaks out her suspicions are being awakened by his curious behaviour when a cow is calving, and again when they are all but run down by a motor-car. Also she has three dreams about him. They are on a farm together; he likes farming.

> Wounding the earth to sow in it and make it feed you. . . . Seeing the steel blade shine, and the long wounds coming in rows; hundreds of wounds wet and shining.

Then the war came with its larger opportunities, which he straightway embraces. Charlotte and John go out to Belgium — he in charge of motor ambulances, she as a chauffeur. And there it is gradually revealed to her that he is a coward, a bully, a brute. Gradually — but Dr. McClane, commandant of the McClane Corps, which shared their mess, had spotted John as a degenerate from the first moment. It was his business so to do; he was a psychotherapist. And every fresh proof of John's brutality is only what he expected. When the coward is shot in the back and dead, and Sutton, another member of the Corps, proposes marriage to Charlotte and she tries to explain that it is impossible because of the war, he (Sutton) believes it is the dead man between them and asks Charlotte to get McClane to explain John's soul. McClane does. He explains how John was forced to behave like that to readjust his power, as the psycho-analysts say. He explains how Charlotte's dreams were her 'kicking against' John. How John's 'not wanting *that*' was because 'he suffered from some physical disability.' He was afraid of women. In fact, he analyses John for Charlotte so that her mind may stop 'the fight going on in it between your feeling . . . and your knowledge of him.' When he has finished:

> Then what she had loved was not John Conway, what she had hated was not he. He was this Something, tremendous and necessary, that escaped her judgment. You couldn't hate it with your loving or hating or your ceasing to love and hate. . . .

But before we leave 'The Romantic,' we should point out Charlotte's obsession by her sexual experiences. First she wondered what the guests at the inn would think if they 'knew.'

Then she 'had to tell' Gwinnie. Then she 'had to tell' John. Then she 'had to tell' Sutton. But why? That is another little problem for Dr. McClane.

Reader, do you remember a pianoforte solo which was extremely popular fifteen years ago? It was called 'La Faute de la Pluie.' Mingled with the dark bass there was a most pitiful treble and a recurring 'cry,' which we took at the time for a chime of bells, but which in the light of Mrs. Hamilton's novel we are inclined to think was the voice of a lost kitten. Mrs. Hamilton as good as tells us that if the weather had not been so dreadful — if it had stopped raining — if her heroine had been less drenched, sopping, wringing wet — if there had been no kitten — her tragedy might never have happened. Here is the story.

A mother and son, deeply attached to each other, combine to ruin the life of the son's wife. The conspirators are slightly common; the wife is exquisitely bred. It is therefore necessary — as the psycho-analysts would say — that to readjust their power they should torture her. So she is bullied, insulted, stormed at, scorned, and doors are slammed in her face. If this were not enough — when the poor creature rescues from death a lame white kitten which, she even goes so far as to explain, is not so much a kitten to her as a symbol of her own misery, they fling it into the water-butt. Whereupon, haunted by its cries, Pauline flings herself after — but into 'the canals.' And there is Peace. If the reader's mind were a shade less blank, he might feel a mild surprise at the husband's going to bed in a room which he shares with his wife and not noticing that she is not in her bed. True, Mrs. Hamilton has been at pains to let slip that the beds were not side by side — but even so. Nay, more, he wakes, gets up in the morning, and does not notice that — either her bed has not been slept in or Susan has been in and made it! A trifle careless, surely, even for a heartless man.

Let us turn to Mrs. Dawson-Scott and the Red Pendragons, that ancient Cornish family that had, 'like an apple, a spreading brown patch, a patch of decay.' But we must let the quotations speak for themselves. There are no hard words in this novel, and there are an immense number of dots; they are so many and so frequent that we believe they must mean more than we have understood.

Cornwall. Old Mrs. Pendragon is dead.

> 'It was the suddenness . . .'
> 'You must of course believe . . .'
> 'You would, but perhaps not at once.'
> 'To sketch her dead face would help. Yes . . .'

Thus Roma Lennox, who had been the old lady's companion.

Cornwall. Roma sees the ploughman, Tavis Hawke, 'the man who brought the bread into being . . .'

Cornwall. Richbell Hawke in her kitchen.

> When baby came!
> . . . If baby were to come to-day . . . to-morrow, she need not worry. Plenty of food in the house . . . from snout to tail, pig's meat was good.

Reader, pray, your attention here! Baby has come!

> Her gesture — bent head, curving body, smile — was ineffable. Eve, mother of all living, had looked like that when the Lord God, still walking — though it was no longer Eden — in the cool of the evening, had lifted the tent flap and asked to see her first-born.

Was it — could it have been the same evening?

But about that spot. Hendre Pendragon, the son, knew it was there.

Like splashes of red-hot paint on a midnight background, the deeds he had done. . . . Done them secretly, in corners, in holes. Such a dull existence. . . .

To readjust his power — as the psycho-analysts would say — he decides to marry Roma, who consents, until she realizes she loves the ploughman and belongs to him.

Wonderful! And so simple. No argument needed or possible. A plain duty which spelt happiness. Such utter bliss. . . .

But Hendre Pendragon? Happily for her, 'man and dog went down together into the raging sea.' Just in time!

Miss Jane Burr is out to explain love — 'the glow of passion.' 'I want to tell if I can how that glow was awakened in me.' She wants to tell her sorrowing sisters that if an attractive gentleman gives them a bouquet of lilies-of-the-valley or 'a five-pound box of Shaw & Page candy,' there is no reason why they should not thank him just as adequately as he and they may wish. Why not? Her heroine guarantees there is no feeling of guilt next morning. And it is a thousand to one their husbands are doing just the same.

But Miss Jane Burr and her explanation disgust us.

(*October 22, 1920.*)

THE SILENCE IS BROKEN

A Gift of the Dusk . . . . . By R. O. Prowse

It does not matter how many times Life has been compared to a journey; there comes a day when each of us makes that comparison for himself and wonders at the mysterious fitness of it. In the confusion and immediate pressure of modern existence we are borne along, we are carried and upheld until we are

half persuaded that we could not escape if we would. Then, suddenly — as though it had all been a dream — the crowd vanishes, the noise dies away, and the little human creature finds himself alone, with time to think of his destination. Well, perhaps the moment need not be grim. Perhaps you will not so dreadfully mind that invisible hand touching you so lightly, that soundless voice whispering so gently: 'But of course you realize that sooner or later the train is going to rush into a black hole, the ship is going to sink out of sight of land.' And you really won't read next morning that 'We regret to announce the death of . . .'; you really won't know, as the last man swings on the box and the horses break into a decent trot, whether it is an adorable wet day — with the sky a waterspout, a soft roaring in the trees, and the first jonquils shaking with flower — or an adorable fine day — when just to walk in the sun and shade is enough. And all your belongings, your cold clothes, all the things you arrange so carefully and love to look at and handle — they will be free once more. Your books . . . the library of the late. . . . Other fingers will rub out the marking under that line and the 'How true!' in the margin. A strange voice, which I swear to you, cross my heart, you won't hear, will say: 'I do wish people didn't write in their books.'

After all — who does think so childishly? Who really minds his own death? True, it would be very interesting, very amusing to see what happens to this or that. But — kindly remove your hand, kindly stop whispering — we flatter ourselves we shall be true to our appearance unto the last. And if you don't mind — we are rather busy — another time, perhaps — *Good*-bye. Or if the little human creature happens to be an artist he does listen. Is not 'That Life hath an Ending' one of the eternal themes for the artist? Yet there is a great, vast difference between a recognition that the destination cannot be escaped and the knowledge

that it is upon you. The artist may put on the black cap and condemn himself to death, but he does not say when the sentence is to be carried out. He may terrify himself — and we do not mean it lightly — by crying: 'I shall never see this almond tree again.' But even in his cry of despair there is hidden his belief in the beauty of other almond trees.

But if judgment has been passed upon him, if it was a Harley Street specialist who wore the cap and tossed off the sentence — ah, then, for the very first time, it is revealed that the Future is contained in the Present. We live that we may live. However rich the present may be, it is a preparation. The writer no sooner finishes his book than he begins to discover what he wants to say. The painter puts the last touch to his picture, thinking that next time he will start off at that last touch. We believe, in spite of the youngest novelists, that lovers see their children in each other's eyes. . . . What is the Present when the Future is removed, when life is haunted, not by Death in the fullness of time, but by Death's fast-encroaching shadow?

In his new novel, 'A Gift of the Dusk,' Mr. Prowse tells us the answer. He does not spare us; he tells 'everything — everything.' And yet we are so book-hardened to-day, there is a danger that this book may, to the casual glance, seem other than it is. It cannot be read by the clock. Have we time for such novels? Ah, have we time for any others? 'A Gift of the Dusk' was created to satisfy the author's desire to tell the truth about his own secret world. It is written in the form of a confession, but the hero, Stephen, might not equally well have confessed to a priest. It is — how shall we explain it? — as though his two selves were transposed. The self which is silent (and yet is never silent) emerges and speaks to that other self in you. It is strange to think of these ceaseless conversations that never languish or fail. We look at our friend, and it were thrilling enough to

know what he was thinking of. How much more thrilling to know what he — the secret he — is saying! And here, in 'A Gift of the Dusk,' we listen to Stephen, the exile from health put into prison in a Swiss Sanatorium:

> One tries still to fancy that one is here by some chance of travel, to flavour the experience with some lingering taste of adventure. One tries to fancy one is a little different from the others. They belong to the place; they are part of it; they are an essential part of the intense impression it conveys; they could not really belong anywhere else! But oneself . . . I look at my letters on the table.

But very gradually that sense of separateness leaves him; the background of the past fades away. Whatever our surroundings are — however strange and terrible they may be — it is human nature to try to adjust ourselves to them; even to establish our claims to them, for however short a time. Even so, Stephen is drawn into the lamentable life of 'Château d'Or.' The peculiar tragedy of the consumptive is that, although he is so seriously ill, he is — in most cases — not ill enough to give up the precious habits of health.

> Perhaps if one were worse, if there were still fewer things one could do, if the tide of one's powers had fallen to a still lower ebb, one might suffer less from the ache of this inner desolation.

Thus the small stricken company, living its impersonal life together among the immense mountains, is for ever mocked by the nearness of those things which are forever out of reach. Even if they recovered: 'Shall we ever again have quite the free run of the world? — we who have carried in our hearts, if not in our hands, the misery of the warning rattle.' It is not easy to be

heroic in such circumstances; it is infinitely harder to remain true to one's secret self — to one's vision, or dream. But Stephen succeeds; he discovers how to bear the 'silence'; it is to surrender to it:

> After which I had a conception more intimate still: I had a sense of my oneness with it. I had an intensified sense of living, as if I had entered into mystic relation with that inner permanence and continuity of things, which for me — at this moment, at least — would be the meaning of life everlasting. . . . There came to me like a draught from the deep wells of being a return of energy and strength and will.

But 'A Gift of the Dusk' is not only a record of suffering — a revelation, rather of how one is alone in one's agony; there grows out of this sorrowful soil a friendship with a fellow-sufferer, Mary Rolls. It is the gift that each receives. What a moment to clasp hands with love! But the beauty of their relationship is that, although every dreadful circumstance is against them, it is untouched. Had they met elsewhere the outward show would have been different, but that which was essential — their deep sense of intimacy, of companionship, their belief in a kingdom shared — would have been the same. Almost, at this point, we would beg for a little less than the truth — almost we would have the author lift his book from the deep shadow which — nevertheless — so wonderfully sustains it. But Mr. Prowse knows better.

> 'Stephen — I want so intensely to live!
>
> It was the cry of cries — a cry from the depth of my own life as well as from the depth of hers.
>
> 'I, too,' I murmured.
>
> 'Ah, you!'
>
> 'Yes, I too, my dear, I too!'

We said no more for some time. We remained silent and still and near: our nearness was the one sure possession that we had, but at least we knew we should have it to the end.

These are the closing words of a memorable novel.

(*October 29, 1920.*)

A BATCH OF FIVE

Lady Lilith	By Stephen McKenna
The Adventurous Lady .	By J. C. Snaith
The Widow's Cruse . . .	By Hamilton Fyfe
Inisheeny	By George Birmingham
The People of the Ruins .	By Edward Shanks

In stating that 'Lady Lilith' is only Part I. of a trilogy which has for covering title 'The Sensationalists,' Mr. McKenna passes a vote of confidence in his powers as an entertainer which we should be sorry to have to second. He is doubtless perfectly right in believing there is a public ready to lap up Part II. and Part III., but it is not the kind of fact we are proud to acknowledge. For Mr. McKenna has chosen to cater for those persons who have an insatiable appetite for the spicy crumbs that fall from the rich man's table — whose supreme happiness it would be, not to have to wait until the feast is over, but to be under the table or behind the door, all the time. Oh, to know more details! To have a fuller, completer account of what goes on when the press is excluded and the Court is not sitting! To hear what they were saying when that photograph was taken! Oh, to be told by one who really knows. . . . And here is the cue for Mr. McKenna; here is where he steps in with such a feast of old champagne corks, soiled gloves, ends of 'goodish cork-tipped Turkish Régies' and the like that, even without Lady Barbara Neave,

daughter of Lord Crawleigh, 'little Barbara,' 'Babs darling' to her friends, 'the haggard Venus' to other friends and Lady Lilith to Val Arden, the table groans. But she is, after all, the occasion of the feast, the dish of the evening. Take any famous young Society beauty, daughter of one of the 'great' families, who at the age of seventeen has been everywhere, met everybody, read everything; who can sing, dance, play better than any professional; give her that fatal charm which knocks the stoutest of us off our legs; let her be so thin, hollow, white-cheeked, ring-eyed, that we 'would not be surprised to hear she was consumptive'; let her be so wild, so untamed, so reckless that no man or woman can hold her; dip her in and out of poker-parties, scandals, coroners' courts, heavily scented mysterious tea parties — and you have Lady Lilith. She is the Social Paragraph blown into two hundred and ninety-four pages.

If Mr. McKenna's novels were witty, amusing, an aspect of the Human Comedy, or just nonsense — or even melodrama — we should not protest. But to butcher his gifts to make a Snob's Banquet is surely a very lamentable pastime. It would be interesting to know whether he has — a dozen, say — readers of his own sex.

With Mr. J. C. Snaith we continue to dwell in marble halls. His 'Adventurous Lady' is the daughter of a Marquis who changes places in the train with a poor little mouse of a governess. So that the governess goes to the Great House as Lady Elfreda, and the other goes to The Laurels as Miss Girlie Cass. Of course they were the same height, the same size; of course nobody at the Great House had ever met the Marquis's daughter, and being for the most part newly-rich (and insufferably stupid), they had no familiar standard by which to judge Girlie. And she had Pikey, Lady Elfreda's maid, a griffon of a female, who nevertheless was determined not to let the honour of the family suffer. The adventures are very little adventures and dread-

fully dull. How poor Girlie was forced by Pikey to take off her woolly combinations and to submit to having her toe-nails cut before putting on the ravishing clothes of the other, does not, we confess, move us deeply. How the governess superbly 'squashed' her employers and won the heart of their guest, the General, does not surprise us. We knew it was bound to come; we knew Lord Duckingfield with his £60,000 a year was bound to marry the governess. We wished very much that Mr. Snaith had not bothered to tell us, especially when we remembered other and very different books of his.

Why is it that a spiritualist séance is — always the same séance? There are the same questions, the same medium, the same little awkwardness about the fee.

> The table gave no answer, but swayed a little, suggesting uneasiness and indecision.
>
> 'Repeat,' said Lewis in a low voice, and Florence asked her question again. The result was the same.
>
> 'The spirit,' announced the medium, 'wishes to make some statement. Call out the letters of the alphabet, please.'
>
> 'A-B-C-D . . .' began Lewis, and went on until he got to 'S,' the table rapping after each letter.

We have read this kind of thing so often that it produces no impression at all. And yet Mr. Hamilton Fyfe in 'The Widow's Cruse' leads us to this scene as though the very heart of the joke were hidden in it. The truth is that by summoning the spirit of Everard he has caused his never-too-substantial novel to vanish into the vague. The idea which might have filled a story was never big enough for a novel; it had to be stretched very thin indeed to be made to cover such an expanse; it is many a time and oft at breaking-point before the final catastrophe. Florence, fluffy little tame cat of a woman, had never loved or understood Everard. When he died she was only too willing to marry Lewis

Dane. But Dane discovered some manuscripts of his dead friend which, when published, raised such a flame of interest that Florence preferred to shine and to warm herself in the rosy-reflected glow as 'the well-known widow' rather than to remarry. More, she reconstructed her late married life and posed as her husband's inspiration. Another woman disputes her claim, but Florence triumphs. Those little women always do — in their own little way — but it is hardly enough to make a book about.

Time is killed very softly, very mildly, by Mr. Birmingham. There is scarce enough of the sweet poison in 'Inisheeny' to render him unconscious, even. He nods while Mr. Birmingham's hero explains how he was in the orchard teaching his nephew Tommy to spray the pear trees with soap and water — but the old fellow needs a more potent charm to carry him past the nodding stage. Mr. Birmingham is famous, and rightly so, for his unfailing sense of humour. But his humour lacks temperature; it stands too often at normal. 'Inisheeny' would be a pleasant, nicely-rounded tale of an island off the coast of Ireland and a charming elderly parson and a professor and a boat and a girl and a boy — if only it were a little less mild. We are asked to take too much for granted. Now the professor might have been well worth listening to, and the parson might have been a whimsical semi-philosopher — but they don't talk. Instead of a long delectable conversation while they rock in the boat together, we are given an account of how Tommy and the girl ate biscuits and golden syrup. This episode should have provided a passing chuckle, to be followed by: 'True,' said the professor, 'but according to Salmacius . . .' They order these things better in Anatole France.

The time could not be riper for Mr. Shanks' novel of the English Revolution — and after. But is not 'after' — the year of our Lord 2074 — a trifle too far ahead? But having accepted the fact that Jeremy Tuft has remained in a state of suspended anima-

tion for so long, we do expect Mr. Shanks to do something better with him than to let him fall in love. A book of this kind is easy and delightful to plan, but extremely difficult to write. If Mr. Shanks had tapped a rich vein of invention and described existence as a thousand times more difficult, he would have set himself an easier task than this attempt to conjure up an England in which the railways are ceasing to run, and the window-panes have turned green again, and the huge and crudely spiced dishes are passed round the table. At England's head is the Speaker, an ancient who aspires to manufacture guns, and Mr. Shanks gets a little fun out of the idea. But it is the Speaker's daughter, and she has grown so dear — *so* dear to Jeremy Tuft, who cheats us of further adventures, and smooths the author's path for him. Love never changes. And yet — why is it that in all romances of this kind the females should be so formidable? One thinks of the Lady Eva, for instance, in her gown 'straight from neck to hem,' as at least nine foot high. And though she is a noble, selfless, loyal creature, strong as a lion and gentle as a lamb — what a terrifying bedfellow!

(*November 5, 1920.*)

THE MAGIC DOOR

Adam of Dublin . . . . . By Conal O'Riordan
Forgotten Realms . . . . . By Bohun Lynch

These two novels have this in common — each is an attempt to re-enter the kingdom of childhood. We confess we are not of those who think all is to be gained by letting the children write for themselves. Poetic peeps from the perambulator, revels among rattles, and picture exhibitions which consist of houses smoking furiously at the chimneys and the behinds of little black cats sitting in front of the fire are very diverting now and

again, but how far they restore to us our vision of that other time is quite a different matter. How shall a child express what is for us the essence of childhood — its recognition of the validity of the dream? It is implicit in the belief of the child that the dream exists side by side with reality; there are no barriers between. It is only after he has suffered the common fate of little children — after he has been stolen away by the fairies — that the changeling who usurps his heritage builds those great walls which confront him when he will return. But to return is not to be a child again. What the exile, the wanderer, desires is to be given the freedom of his two worlds again — that he may accept reality and live by the dream. And therefore the childhood that we look back upon and attempt to recreate must be — if it is to satisfy our longing as well as our memory — a great deal more than a catalogue of infant pleasures and pangs. It must have, as it were, a haunting light upon it.

Let us take, for instance, Mr. O'Riordan's novel 'Adam of Dublin.' It is the story of a little boy's life from the age of eight to the age of twelve, yet it is told in such a way that, in spite of the intense vividness of Adam's personal adventures, they become for us a symbol of the adventures of the child spirit in this bungled world. If ever reality looked loweringly upon a little child, that child was Adam; but what power has it over him? For the moment it is real as the nightmare is real; it is, almost, part of the nightmare, like his father's porter bottle; it is as quickly escaped and forgotten:

> He went to sleep and dreamed that her ladyship was something between a unicorn and a road-roller, with several tails, to each of which was tied a flaming sardine-tin, and as many heads, crowned by helmets of that fashion affected by the Dublin Metropolitan police. Her ladyship had run him down in Mountjoy Court, and . . . was about to put him into

one or more of the sardine-tins when he woke with a scream, was soundly chastised by Mr. Macfadden with the fortunately convenient porter bottle; and, after he had recovered from the shock, fell into a peaceful and refreshing slumber.

And yet if we consider what place it is that Adam escapes into, what is the nature of this other world, it again seems to be contained in reality. The difference is that in the one he is a stranger, in the other — the world in which he prays to 'Holy Mary her Virgin,' and kisses Caroline Brady in the tunnel, and reads, by the light of his bull's-eye lantern, Mr. Yeats' or Mr. Keats' poem 'The Beautiful Lady Without Thankyou,' or sits in Josephine's lap while he kisses her — he is at home.

What do we mean when we speak of the atmosphere of a novel? It is one of those questions exceedingly difficult to fit with an answer. It is one of those questions which, each time we look at them, seem to have grown. At one time 'emotional quality' seemed to cover it, but is that adequate? May not a book have that and yet lack this mysterious covering? Is it the impress of the writer's personality upon his work — the impress of the writer's passion — more than that? Dear Heaven! there are moments when we are inclined to take our poor puzzled mind upon our knee and tell it: 'It is something that happens to a book after it is written. It droppeth like the gentle dew from Heaven upon the book beneath.' Or to cry largely: 'You feel a book either has it, whatever it is, or hasn't it.'

But to be so positive — as one is in the case of 'Adam of Dublin' — about the presence of something so elusive is disconcerting. Let us, however, understand it to mean; among so many dead novels it is a delight to hail one that is so rich in life. For whatever else atmosphere may include, it is the element in which a book lives in its own right. In peopling the two worlds of Adam with appropriate and inappropriate inhabitants

there are infinite possibilities for the creative activity of the author. The character of Mr. Malachy Macfadden, the drunken tailor, is a fearful joy to the reader if it is not to his son, and so is that of his somewhat sinister godfather, Mr. Byron O'Toole. As to Father Innocent Feeley, Adam's spiritual adviser, we defy the reader to resist him or his conversation on the top of the tram with Adam regarding the infallibility of the Pope and the infallibility of the Almighty. Adam himself is one of those small boys (why are they always boys?) who occur from time to time in literature to trouble our hearts. Mr. O'Riordan has but discovered a new name for him — and a new place. For throughout this novel one is never forgetful of the background of the city of Dublin; the author presses all his power and charm of writing to the service of 'what is believed to be the fairest, if not the most extensive, kingdom in Europe.' His success is so notable that we grudge mentioning his moment of failure. But it is there in Chapter Twenty-eight, when he carries his little hero into Bohemia. Why was this account of a club meeting written? We fear the reason was that the author could not resist the temptation of a portrait or two, but his hero's life is at stake while he sketches. However, there is so much good to remember that, having mentioned the bad, we can afford to forget it. It is the measure of Mr. O'Riordan's powers of fascination that we should be so conscious of any weakening of their spell.

'Forgotten Realms' is as different a novel as possible, yet, as we have stated, the intention of the author is the same. But Mr. Lynch has chosen a more difficult approach. His hero is a grown man, the husband of a sensible, managing wife, the father of a young family, who is impelled, suddenly, to leave his home and familiar surroundings at the beck of childish memories, to set out 'as a child might in imagination, to discover, to observe lovely things, to seek adventure.' The first chapter when he is discovered lying in the grass is a very remarkable one. In a way

it may be said to mark the curve of Philip's journey for us. As he lies there, looking and listening, he is suddenly conscious that the 'intensely practical modern world has dropped away from him,' far enough for him to question which was to be desired — constant occupation and forgetfulness or the treasuring of time for contemplation — for coming near to the heart of things:

> Or was it that moments of intense vision came only by rare chance? Was it not rather an attitude of mind that the perplexities, the unwise activities of usual existence threatened to destroy? Such moments held a child's attitude towards the universe, induced a child's vision. Children were much nearer to the secret.

And thus he is led to look back with longing upon the time when the 'magic door' was not shut for him, and the purpose of his journey is revealed. Might one then in after years, after searching and much pain, find one's way back to it, and would they open it when he came again?

Forward, therefore, his feet carry him into unknown beautiful country, while his mind is for ever seeking the frontiers of its ancient kingdom. And it is only when he has given himself up to the search that he realizes how deep is his restlessness, how urgent his desire to recapture the secret resting-place of his soul.

We pass by almost imperceptible nuances from the one adventure to the other; they merge, they are enfolded, they are blended with exquisite skill. We share each fresh prospect as it unfolds before Philip the man, while at the same time we are gathering wild roses with Philip the little boy, or waiting with him in the drawing-room for his father to come home. But gradually the search becomes more difficult; it narrows, and it changes from the reconciliation of childhood and manhood to a deliberate attempt to solve a mystery. In the unending story of adventure which the lonely child Philip made up for himself

there was another figure, a wonderful companion, a boy to whom he was ever constant, about whom there could never be any illusion. When he recalls how, as a youth in London, he saw the face, the form of his dreams, he recognized it and 'guessed at a possible ending to his magic tale' (what does Mr. Lynch mean there?). And finally we are told that Philip is not setting forth in freedom after all; he has heard that his dream companion is in this part of the country, and he is come in search of him. This is a very curious disappointment for the reader, but there is a greater in store for him. It is contained in Philip's memories of his mother. She changes, gradually, under the imposition of this 'real plot,' from an extremely sensitive, sympathetic figure to a poor creature under a curse that, until it is revealed to us, raises our most fearful speculations.

Let us own that there is a point at which we lose all touch with Mr. Lynch, and we simply do not know what he would have us understand. Here is this beautiful writing, this thoughtful, serious style, so chastened and yet so supple — but what does it hide? What is the mystical meaning? Ah, there we imagine Mr. Lynch thinks to have caught us. But we do not think it will do. So long as they are kept apart psychology and mysticism are sweet friends. But put them to hunt together and they turn and rend each other.

(*December 11, 1920.*)

OLD WRITERS AND NEW

Manhood End . . . . By Mrs. Henry Dudeney
Quiet Interior . . . . By E. B. C. Jones

Whatever faults Mrs. Dudeney may possess, she cannot be accused of having kept her talent hid in a napkin. Rather, we receive the impression that the cry of rapture with which she

hailed this treasure to be hers has never ceased sounding through her books. It rings again in 'Manhood End,' and the note is as high, as astonished, as delighted as ever. Never did a writer gloat more openly over a sweet possession; never was a writer more persistently agog to play with it. But a talent is not — as Mrs. Dudeney seems to believe — a kind of glorified toy. One may perhaps play with it — but warily — as one would play with a young lion without a keeper rather than a mechanical canary. That is not, however, nor has it been, Mrs. Dudeney's way, and the result is that after eighteen novels, after so prolonged a diet of hard bright seed, chickweed and sugar lumps, nothing remains of her lion but the colour of his feathers — he is turned into a very canary of canaries. As such he shakes, shrills, quivers, flirts through 'Manhood End' without a break, without a pause, until we cannot hear the characters speak. When they do they partake of the general jerkiness. Even the plot itself is affected, and hops from perch to swing until the reader is dizzy. The scene is Sussex — a tiny village between Chichester and the sea. 'If there was a coquette in the whole land of England it was this flat, sheltered bit of South Country — laughing, weeping, just as it chose.'

The time is forty years ago. Freddy Rainbird, Rector of Streetway, calls himself a priest, and does not believe in marriage until he meets Sophia Lulham. Their courtship consists of conversations which culminate in a toasting party by firelight.

> He watched her scramble up when her slice of bread was toasted. She buttered it, then, laughing again, sat down.
>
> 'We've got to feel for our mouths, haven't we? But mine's so big there's no risk of missing.'

This curious statement, which might very well have 'pierced through their perfect hour,' did not prevent him from proposing. And they were married, and such was the intensity of their

passion for each other they talked like this. Rainbird was in his dressing-room.

She went mischievously to the door and spoke through the keyhole.

'Bad boy! you're not washing yourself. There isn't any splashing.'

He did not answer. She spoke again.

'Freddy! you are false, you are neglectful. You said you wanted to kiss my arms, and yet you went off without even shaking hands.'

After five years she had tired of this capriciousness, of 'bubbling . . . with a hundred little springs of fascination.'

'Why didn't we have children? If there'd been a baby waking up to be fed! If little Johnny had a pain in his tummy; if Jane wouldn't go to sleep. . . . I shouldn't have played the fool down here . . . with you two men if I'd had a nursery. Don't you see?'

So off she goes with a lover, and stays away for five years. Then she reappears and makes the coffee in her bewildering, charming way, and just when she is about to be bored again the baby saves her. But it isn't a strong baby.

She looked up wistfully. 'I haven't done it quite properly, Freddy. I'm never perfect. There's always some sort of a flaw.'

'What flaw?' he seemed puzzled.

'This.' Her fingers moved on the fast emptying bottle.

After its death she runs again — to the East — to Bond Street — to anywhere. And her final return is to a broken Freddy who drinks coffee made from 'some stuff in a tin.' They die soon after, while planning another honeymoon.

It is melancholy to remember, when laying aside 'Manhood

End,' how, years ago, when the canarification of her talent was still far from complete, we looked forward to a new book by Mrs. Dudeney.

The price of novels is a mystery. Why is it that some publishers are compelled to print their books on grey, black-haired paper, to squeeze them between the covers that used to contain 'ninepennies' in the old days and to price them at nine shillings, when Mr. Cobden-Sanderson can produce a volume so attractive in appearance as 'Quiet Interior' at eight? And do some publishers imagine that the reading public is really tempted by paper-covers which remind one of those dread platefuls in English teashops known as 'mixed pastries'? We are certain that the book which is adorned with the enigmatic couple of the anaemic girl in coloured margarine and plaster-of-paris on a white icing background starts its career with a severe handicap. It has to prove that it is not what it appears to be, and that is very difficult when the appearance is vulgar, for in that case the chances are the reader will not even begin to listen. How often we have heard the scornful: 'Don't bother to open it; it looks the most awful rubbish'! Whereas Miss Jones' novel in a blue linen-faced cover with the title in plain lettering attracts one immediately. It looks like a novel that is well worth reading, and in this case the author is not deceived after a closer investigation.

'Quiet Interior' is the study of the temperament of an unusual, fastidious girl in surroundings which we vaguely term modern. Her home is in London; her parents are wealthy; her friends are artists and musicians and gay young people who go to parties and dances. She is in fact an emancipated daughter in an upper middle-class family — but not too emancipated for her to possess in a high degree that subtle quality called 'charm.' One might say her whole claim to acceptance lies in its possession, but of what it is composed — that is the problem that the author has

set herself to solve. Claire Norris is not a simple character. She is one of those who are 'precious — but not generally prized.' Her feeling for life is exquisite; she is capable of rare appreciations, rare intensities — but for some mysterious reason life withholds its gifts from her. They go to lesser people who deserve them less and do not so greatly care. Why should this be? What has she done that she, who could cherish so beautifully, should be left empty-handed? The moment in her life when this question becomes urgent is the moment which is revealed here. There is a young man living in the country, farming his land; his name is Clement. He is shy, difficult, a being apart, himself. With the adorable faith of young persons and children, Claire turns to Life and cries: 'I know what I want. I want Clement. Give him to me.' But Life explains Clement is not for her; he is for her pretty sister Pauline. And Claire must be a good girl and not spoil her sister's pleasure by showing that she minds, but put on a bright face and behave as though nothing has happened. Instead of rebelling she is gravely obedient, but while renouncing Clement she discovers that she has lost one world only to gain another — her inner world, the kingdom of the spirit. Claire realizes that up till now she has lived on the borders of that world; she has never been of it. Yet, because its shadow rested upon her, she was, for all her love of it, strange to the world of reality. Now that she has made her choice, even her suffering grows light. Nothing can touch her; she is in harmony with life.

The psychology of Claire is sufficiently realized for us to feel the importance of this revelation to her. She strangely compels our admiration by the quality of her adventure. But this whole novel is carried beyond the bounds of commonplace by its distinction of style. We feel that the author has tried to keep faith with Truth rather than with Truth's ugly and stupid half-sister, Frankness. Her heroine is, of course, the full-length por-

trait upon which she has lavished her finest care, but Pauline, Henriette and Lucien and Hilary — all are real and convincing. For a first novel it is remarkably well constructed. The weakest part is the beginning. It reads as though the author were determined that we should fall in love with her heroine on the spot. 'She is like this and this and this,' we are told. It is only, in fact, when the author has forgotten all about us that Claire begins to emerge. And again there are moments when the author wastes her energy, as it were, over the details; she does not always distinguish between what is fascinating and what is essential. This is an important point. For there are many writers — alas! how many! — who can describe a frock, a conversation, a supper party, or a room as well as she.

(*November 19, 1920.*)

A SET OF FOUR

The Countess of Lowndes Square; and Other Stories	By E. F. Benson
Just Open	By W. Pett Ridge
A Man of the Islands . .	By H. de Vere Stacpoole
Colour Blind	By S. P. B. Mais

Mr. Benson is a writer to whom, one imagines, everything comes in useful. He is a collector of scraps, snippets, patches, tid-bits, oddments, which give him such a great deal of pleasure that it is with the utmost confidence he displays his little collection to all the other guests in this immense rambling, very noisy and over-crowded hotel. He knows himself to be — his behaviour is that of — a favourite guest. 'Mr. E. F. Benson is so popular — so entertaining.' And so in his easy, effortless way out comes another book. Here, he even explains, you've got cats, cranks, spiritualistic séances, blackmailers — choose whichever you like;

there's something for everybody. So down drops the knitting; the cards are put away; the picture paper is concealed behind a cushion for another time, and 'The Countess of Lowndes Square' is no doubt discovered to be *just* like Mr. Benson — *most* entertaining this time.

Reader! We are the forlorn guest on these occasions. We are that strange-looking person over in the corner who seems so out of everything and never will mix properly. Spare your knitting-needle; put up your paper-knife, sir. Do not stab us. It is not our fault that we look grim. It isn't pleasant to be bored. Will you believe us when we say we love smiling, we love to be amused? We always think, until faced by these occasions, that it takes too little to make us smile. But there is an atmosphere of bright chatter, of quick, animated glare which is warm South to Mr. Benson and his admirers while it freezes our risible folds.

> . . . I had been asked by telephone just at luncheon-time as I was sitting down to a tough and mournful omelette alone, and I naturally felt quite certain that I had been bidden to take the place of some guest.

Or listen to the 'adorable Agnes Lockett':

> . . . If Mrs. Withers had told me any more of what the great ones of the earth said to her in confidence, I should either have gone mad or taken up a handful of those soft chocolates and rubbed her face with them.

But it is perhaps hardly fair to take to pieces what the author himself calls 'digestible snacks.' This, we venture to suggest, should have been the title of the volume. And would it not be an admirable idea if there were a covering title for stories of the author's own description? 'Snacks' for instance, could hardly be improved upon. 'Digestible Snacks' is illuminating; it tells us exactly what we are buying.

We speak thus openly, for Mr. Benson confesses that in his opinion 'the short story is not a lyre on which English writers thrum with the firm delicacy of the French, or with the industry of the American author.' He opines that if the ten best short stories in the world were proclaimed they would be French stories; while if the million worst were brought together, they would be found to be written in America. *Chi lo sa?* as d'Annunzio's heroines were so fond of murmuring. But our eye wanders to the small green volumes of Turgeniev and Tchehov. Russia is evidently torn out of Mr. Benson's atlas.

A word as to the wrapper. It is of a young lady in a white dress with very flowing hair. Behind her is the Egyptian night; before, a pack of gibbering (in the story they are most particularly apish) apes. But the illustrator has drawn French poodles instead. This makes it very hard to understand why she looks so frightened.

'Just Open,' by Mr. Pett Ridge, is adapted for a railway journey on which the train stops at all the stations — one of those journeys when one is constantly rearranging one's knees, saying one does not mind at all having the golf-clubs thrown on to one's paper of violets, and swearing that it is not — and never was, thank God! — one's copy of *The Daily Mirror* on the floor. In these surroundings dips are all the reader is fit for, and dips are all that the author provides — they are sketches of little people who, entangled for ever in the net of circumstance, are yet alive enough to make some protest when they feel an extra jerk. There is a slight commotion, a swimming together, a lashing of tails, a wriggle or two. But it lasts only a minute; with the turn of the blank page there is calm. . . .

The old theatrical star is tempted to go to see the show one night, and she is recognized and taken behind the scenes and made much of. Again she lifts the glass to her lips, but there is no wine. Just a breath, a sweetness — a memory that she sips —

and then all is over. Well — mightn't that be a marvellous story? Isn't it one of the stories that we all keep, unwritten, to write some day, when we have realized more fully that moment, perhaps, when she steps out of the theatre into the cold indifferent dark, or perhaps, that moment when the light breaks along the edge of the curtain and the music sinks down, lower, lower, until the fiddles are sounding from under the sea? . . . But Mr. Pett Ridge gives us his version of it as though he expected it to be read between nine forty-five and ten-thirteen.

'Poor old soul!' we presume his admiring reader thinks, slapping her book together and asking her neighbour if he would mind *not* sitting on her coat any longer as this is her station and she can't afford to jump bodily out of her coat on to the platform? But is that tribute enough? Does that content the author? We wonder because there are 'hints' in several stories that lead us to believe he could, if he would, tell it all so differently.

Mr. de Vere Stacpoole, to judge by 'A Man of the Islands,' still believes he has only to shake a coral island at us to set us leaping. But we have cut our teeth on it so dreadfully often. We have counted the cocoanuts, discovered the square bottle half-buried in the deserted beach, and fished the lagoon of its last false pearl. The only episode that arrested our attention in this book was when Sigurdson saw the front end of Pilcher down on the coral, scrabbling along on its hands like a crab.

> He'd been bitten off below the waist by a shark that had took him just as a child takes a piece of candy and bites it in two!

What a degradation is this when nothing less fearful will draw us to the ship's side! As to that slender, dark girl with the scarlet hibiscus flower behind her ear and her hand lifted in the familiar 'Come to Motuaro' gesture — she makes us almost inclined to signal 'full steam ahead' for the opposite direction. It is not enough to know that the fate of that great, strong man

lay in those small, scented hands. What did he feel about it? Did he feel anything? Did they talk together? What did they share? How was his love for her different from his love for a white girl? . . . Or, if the question is all of the scenery, let us feel the strangeness of it. Sigurdson is a Dane. Did he have more of the feelings of an exile? Here, indeed, is our whole point about coral islands, dark blue seas and crescent beaches pale as the new moon. We will not be put off with pictures any longer. We ask that someone should discover the deeper strangeness for us, so that our imagination is not allowed to go starving while our senses are feasted.

There remains 'Colour-Blind,' a new novel with an old hero, By Mr. S. P. B. Mais. The hero is still that unsympathetic figure, the amorous schoolmaster.

> She was mine, all mine for the taking! In that moment of triumph I forgot everything but the glory of her . . . but the moment passed and I braced myself to meet my great temptation. 'Margey, dear,' I began as gently as I could, 'it won't do. Think.'

This is followed by little dinners 'on the strict Q.T.,' with the fair Evelyn in a yellow osprey—to be followed again by the blackboards and Smith minor next morning.

But it is not until little Joan, fragile in her pyjamas, crept into his arms that Jimmy knew the greatest night of his life. Here is Mr. Mais at his brightest, best, most fanciful.

Jimmy has rung for the chambermaid, who came in 'smiling.'

> 'We're going to have our breakfast in bed as a special treat,' I said. 'Grown-up people don't think it a treat because the crumbs get all mixed up with their bed-clothes, but that'll be all the greater fun for us. We've run away, and we want to do all the things we shouldn't be allowed to do at school.

Was the chambermaid still smiling at the end of that speech, we wonder, and didn't she guess the hero's vocation without his telling her he had run away from it?

(*November 26, 1920.*)

FRIENDS AND FOES

Personal Aspects of Jane Austen By M. Austen-Leigh

It seems almost unkind to criticize a little book which has thrown on bonnet and shawl and tripped across the fields of criticism at so round a pace to defend its dear Jane Austen. But even with the undesirable evidence before us of the stupidity, nay, the downright wickedness of certain reviewers, we cannot help doubting the need for such a journey. True, Jane Austen exists in the imagination as a writer who has remained wonderfully remote and apart and free from the flying burrs of this work-a-day world, and it does come as a surprise to learn that so-called friends of hers have said these dreadful things. But, begging Miss Austen-Leigh's pardon — who cares? Can we picture Jane Austen caring — except in a delightfully wicked way which we are sure the author of this book would not allow — that people said she was no lady, was not fond of children, hated animals, did not care a pin for the poor, could not have written about foreign parts if she had tried, had no idea how a fox was killed, but rather thought it ran up a tree and hissed at the hound at the last — was, in short, cold, coarse, practically illiterate and without morality? Mightn't her reply have been, 'Ah, but what about my novels?' Though the answer would seem to us more than sufficient, it would not satisfy Miss Austen-Leigh. Her book is proof to the contrary. Each of these charges can be met — and they are met, though, to be quite candid, it is somewhat quaintly, at times. Take, for instance, the 'baseless

accusation that she always turned away from whatever was sad.' It cannot, says Miss Austen-Leigh, be allowed to pass unnoticed. And she cites a family letter written by Mr. Austen on the occasion of a young friend's having been invited to their house to have her attack of measles there: 'She wanted a great deal of nursing, and a great deal of nursing she had,' the nurses being Jane, her sister Cassandra and their friend Martha Lloyd. Well, that may go to prove that Jane was willing to face an unpleasant ordeal and to play her part, but we should not like our belief in her tenderness to depend on it. Does it not sound just a little grim? Might not a timid mind picture patient and pillows being shaken together; and, as to escaping one's medicine, Cassandra and Martha to hold one down, and Jane to administer something awfully black in a spoon? . . .

Then, again, someone having said that sermons were wearisome to her, Miss Austen-Leigh contradicts him triumphantly with Jane Austen's own words, 'I am very fond of Sherlock's Sermons, and prefer them to almost any.' But stare at that sentence as we may, we cannot see an enthusiasm for sermons shining through it. It sounds indeed as though Sherlock's Sermons were a special kind of biscuit — clerical Bath Olivers — oval and crisp and dry. And while we are on the subject of religion we would mention Miss Austen-Leigh's theory of the novels. It is, we think, quite a new one:

> Every one of them gives a description, closely interwoven with the story and concerned with its principal characters, of error committed, conviction following, and improvement effected, all of which may be summed up in the word 'Repentance.'

What could be simpler? Yet we had never thought of it before.

But to return for a moment to the foes of Jane Austen. In the majority of cases they are routed in the completest fashion.

No one, after reading of her paternal descent from the county family of Kentish Austens or of her maternal descent from the Leighs — a notable ancestor being Thomas Leigh, who in 1558 had the honour of receiving and preceding Queen Elizabeth, 'carrying the sceptre before her Grace when she first entered the City to take up her residence in the Tower' — no one could dare say again that she was not qualified to write of the English gentry. And he would be an obstinate fellow who would persist in describing Jane Austen's disposition as calm, unemotional, passionless, after having read her notes written at the age of twelve, in an old copy of Oliver Goldsmith's 'History of England.' These fiery outpourings are the pleasantest reading of all, and we are exceedingly grateful to Miss Austen-Leigh for printing them for us. They do, indeed, revive Jane Austen's own voice; we can separate them from the comment. For the truth is that every true admirer of the novels cherishes the happy thought that he alone — reading between the lines — has become the secret friend of their author.

(*December 3, 1920.*)

FAMILY PORTRAITS

In Chancery . . . . . By John Galsworthy
The Age of Innocence . . . By Edith Wharton

In his latest novel, which is a continuation of the Forsyte Saga, Mr. John Galsworthy gives the impression of being in his real right element. There is a peculiar note, a mixture of confidence and hospitality, struck in the first chapter, which seems to come from the happy author warming himself at a familiar hearth. Here, in the very bosom of the Forsyte family, if any man is at home, he is that man. Its ramifications have no terrors for him; on the contrary, the quick, searching, backward glance he takes

before setting out upon this book is yet long enough to be a kind of basking which extends to the cousin furthest removed.

A swollen flood of novels has flowed under the bridge since the days of our enthusiasm for 'The Man of Property'—that large family piece, admirably composed, closely packed, and firmly related to a background which was never decoration only. 'In Chancery' is less solid as a whole—the shell-pink azaleas escape the control of Soames' conservatory and flower a trifle too freely, as they are also a trifle too shell-pink; the tone is softer. It is not because the author is regarding his subject from another angle, but because all that remains from the deep vein of irony in 'The Man of Property' is a faint ironic tinge. In 'The Man of Property' what the author made us feel the Forsyte family lacked was imagination; in this new novel we feel it still, but we are not at all certain the author intends us to. He has, as it were, exchanged one prize for another—in gaining the walls he has lost his vision of the fortress. It is a very great gift for an author to be able to project himself into the hearts and minds of his characters—but more is needed to make a great creative artist; he must be able, with equal power, to withdraw, to survey what is happening—and from an eminence. But Mr. Galsworthy is so deeply engaged, immersed and engrossed in the Forsyte family that he loses this freedom. He can see Soames and James and the two Bayswater Road ancients with intense vividness; he can tell us all about them—but not all there is to know. Why is this? Is it not because, *au fond*, he distrusts his creative energy? There is no question of a real combat between it and his mind; his mind is master. Hence we have a brilliant display of analysis and dissection, but without any 'mystery,' any unplumbed depth to feed our imagination upon. The Forsyte men are so completely life-size, so bound within the crowns of their hats and the soles of their shoes, that they are almost something less than men. We do not doubt for a moment that it has been

the aim of the author to appeal to the imagination; but so strong is the imposition of his mind that the appeal stops short at the senses. Take, for example, the character of old James Forsyte. Is it not amazing how he comes before us so that we see him, hear him, smell him, know his ways, his tricks, his habits as if he were our grandfather? Yet when we think of him — is it as standing at the window of his house watching the funeral of the old Queen, watching his own funeral and the funeral of his time — or as having his few last hairs stroked by Emily with a pair of silver brushes? These events should be of equal importance, at least; but they are not; the hair-brushing is easily first; and the author dwells on it with loving persistence until he almost succeeds in turning James into a lean, nervous, old, old, dog. Or take the occasion when young Val Dartie came face to face with his father, drunk, in the promenade of a music-hall. Before going out that evening he had asked his mother if he might have two plover's eggs when he came in. And when he does return, shocked, wretched, disenchanted with life, we find our concern for him overshadowed by those two plover's eggs laid out so temptingly with the cut bread and butter and 'just enough whisky in the decanter,' and left to languish on the dining-room table. But perhaps these instances are too simple to illustrate our meaning. Let us examine for a moment the figure of Soames Forsyte, who is the hero of 'In Chancery.' His desire to have a son makes him divorce the faithless Irene and thus free himself to marry a healthy young Frenchwoman, the daughter of a restaurant keeper. Now Soames, the passionate, suppressed human animal desiring Irene still because she is unattainable, but satisfying himself with the French girl at the last is as solid, as substantial as a mind could make him, but he is never real. He is flesh and blood with a strong dash of clay — long before he is a tormented man; and flesh and blood and clay he remains after the torment is on him. But there never comes that moment when

the character is more than himself, so that we feel at the end that what should have happened to him never has happened. He is an appearance only — a lifelike image.

But when we have said that 'In Chancery' is not a great novel, we would assure our readers that it is a fascinating, brilliant book.

In 'The Age of Innocence,' a novel of the early seventies in New York, we receive the same impression that here is the element in which the author delights to breathe. The time and the scene together suit Mrs. Wharton's talent to a nicety. To evoke the seventies is to evoke irony and romance at once, and to keep these two balanced by all manner of delicate adjustments is so much a matter for her skilful hand that it seems more like play than work. Like Mr. Galsworthy's novel it is a family piece, but in 'The Age of Innocence' the family comprises the whole of New York society. This remote, exclusive small world in itself is disturbed one day by the return of one of its prodigal daughters who begs to be taken back as though nothing had happened. What has happened is never quite clear, but it includes a fabulously rich villain of a Polish Count who is her husband and his secretary, who, rumour whispers, was all too ready to aid her escape. But the real problem which the family has to face is that Ellen Olenska has become that mysterious creature — a European. She is dangerous, fascinating, foreign; Europe clings to her like a troubling perfume; her very fan beats 'Venice! Venice!' every diamond is a drop of Paris. Dare they accept her? The question is answered by a dignified compromise, and Ellen's farewell dinner-party before she leaves for Paris is as distinguished as she or the family could wish. These are what one might call the outer leaves of the story. Part them, and there is within another flower, warmer, deeper, and more delicate. It is the love-story of Newland Archer, a young man who belongs deeply to the family tradition, and yet at the same time finds himself wishing to rebel. The charm of Ellen is his temptation, and hard

indeed he finds it not to yield. But that very quality in her which so allures him — what one might call her highly civilized appreciation of the exquisite difficulty of her position — saves them from themselves. Not a feather of dignity is ruffled; their parting is positively stately.

But what about us? What about her readers? Does Mrs. Wharton expect us to grow warm in a gallery where the temperature is so sparklingly cool? We are looking at portraits — are we not? These are human beings, arranged for exhibition purposes, framed, glazed, and hung in the perfect light. They pale, they grow paler, they flush, they raise their 'clearest eyes,' they hold out their arms to each other 'extended, but not rigid,' and the voice is the voice of the portrait:

> 'What's the use — when will you go back?' he broke out, a great hopeless *How on earth can I keep you?* crying out to her beneath his words.

Is it — in this world — vulgar to ask for more? To ask that the feeling shall be greater than the cause that excites it, to beg to be allowed to share the moment of exposition (is not that the very moment that all our writing leads to?), to entreat a little wildness, a dark place or two in the soul?

We appreciate fully Mrs. Wharton's skill and delicate workmanship; she has the situation in hand from the first page to the last; we realize how savage must sound our cry of protest, and yet we cannot help but make it; that after all we are not above suspicion — even the 'finest' of us!

(*December 10, 1920.*)

Aaron's Rod . . . . . By D. H. Lawrence

There are certain things in this book I do not like. But they are not important, or really part of it. They are trivial, encrusted,

they cling to it as snails to the underside of a leaf — no more, — and perhaps they leave a little silvery trail, a smear, that one shrinks from as from a kind of silliness. But apart from these things is the leaf, is the tree, firmly planted, deep thrusting, outspread, growing grandly, alive in every twig. All the time I read this book I felt it was feeding me.

(*A note in K. M.'s copy of the book, 1922.*)

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A NOTE ON THE TYPE IN WHICH THIS BOOK IS SET

This book is set on the Linotype in Granjon, a type which is neither a copy of a classic face nor an original creation. George W. Jones drew the basic design for this type from classic sources, but deviated from his model wherever four centuries of type-cutting experience indicated an improvement or where modern methods of punch-cutting made possible a refinement that was beyond the skill of the sixteenth-century originator. This new creation is based primarily upon the type used by Claude Garamont (1510–1561) in his beautiful French books and more closely resembles the work of the founder of the Old Style letter than do any of the various modern-day types that bear his name.

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